



## Facial Pain Association – Orange County Chapter Path to Wellness

### Get the Right Doctors

PCP – Neurologist – Neurosurgeon:

- Your Primary Care Physician needs to evaluate your general health and refer you to a Neurologist.
- Your Neurologist needs to examine your condition, order an MRI, and prescribe drug therapies for pain management.
- Your Neurosurgeon needs to evaluate your MRI, give you a definitive diagnosis, and recommend treatment options. If you agree, he/she performs the MVD surgery or a palliative destructive procedure such as the Gamma Knife procedure or one of the three needle procedures.

### Get a definitive diagnosis

- Sometimes a Neurologist, or a specialized healthcare provider, can correctly diagnose you from your symptoms. Often it takes an MRI. Be sure it is TN and not a dental problem. Also, there are different types of TN. Remember that only radiologists and neurosurgeons usually interpret the actual MRI scans, most neurologists and other non-surgical healthcare providers simply read MRI reports. Since many radiologists are not familiar with trigeminal neuralgia, it is usually best to have your MRI reviewed by a neurosurgeon experienced in this condition.

### Find a TNA Support Group Chapter

- This condition is relatively rare and requires information to address it properly. Also, since it is rare and extremely painful, it can be socially isolating. It's hard for others to understand because they cannot see it. A support group can provide information on the condition itself, specialized healthcare providers, as well as much needed emotional support from people who know what you are going through.

### Do your homework

- Keep a journal, if you can. Record your episodes and the drugs you are taking.
- Record what you learn at the TN support group meetings.
- Make note of your doctor(s) appointments.
- Go online and read all about it.

### Ask Questions

- Information is essential with this condition.
- Ask your Neurologist about the drug therapies (How will I feel? What is the proper dosage? How long will it last? What other drugs are available? What are the side effects? And so forth.)
- What alternative therapies are available? (Chiropractic care, massage therapy, hypnotherapy, acupuncture, etc.)
- Ask about your surgical options, the risks and benefits.
- Ask for assistance in figuring out the financing of this treatment. The neurosurgeons' staff are good at working with the insurance companies and advising you.

### Evaluate the Surgical and Medical Procedures with Your Neurosurgeon

- Micro Vascular Decompression (MVD) Surgery (highest success rate with experienced surgeon; most invasive, most durable relief with lowest recurrence rate)
- Gamma Knife (MVD v. Gamma Knife) (least invasive; lower success rates, high recurrence rate by five years). **Own your pain and take action! (There is light at the end of the tunnel.)**

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