

## Finding A Neurosurgeon

*The first step in getting proper treatment for Chiari is to find the right doctor. While many patients are referred first to a neurologist, given that the only real treatment for Chiari is surgical, Conquer Chiari recommends that patients see a neurosurgeon for evaluation.*

## As a policy, Conquer Chiari does not refer people to specific neurosurgeons

1. *There is no professional certification or sub-specialty for Chiari*
2. *There are no objective data available on the success of individual surgeons*
3. *Each patient is unique and is likely to prefer different things in a neurosurgeon*



## How do you find a good neurosurgeon?

As such, we recommend that each patient (or parent) do the work necessary to find the neurosurgeon that is right for them. Thus, the question becomes how do you find a good neurosurgeon? There are many ways to go about it, and below are some suggestions. Keep in mind these are just suggestions, you may decide to use all of them, use some of them, or not to use any of them at all. There is no right answer, but like anything else, the more work you put into it, the better the result is likely to be.

1. **Set emotion aside.** This can be extremely difficult to do, especially if the diagnosis has come as surprise, or if you have been told for years there is nothing wrong. However, this is an important decision, and a methodical approach to the matter can help. If necessary, recruit a family member to help you through the process.
2. **Establish your criteria.** Everyone is looking for something different. What is right for one person may not be right for someone else. Think through what YOU, as a patient, feel is important in a doctor. Some items to consider:
  - a. **Location**
  - b. **University Based or Private Practice**
  - c. **Someone who does a lot of Chiari surgeries or a general surgeon?**
  - e. **With what you know about yourself, do you have a straightforward case, or a complicated one with multiple problems?**
  - f. **Insurance and cost**
3. **Create a list of candidates.** This is the step where you create a pool of potential doctors to match against your list of criteria. You can build the list from a number of sources, including:
  - a. **The professional societies' websites**
  - b. **If you live near one or more Universities with medical schools**
  - c. **Ask everyone you know**
  - d. **Use the internet**
  - e. **A lot of people use chat rooms and message boards to find doctors.**
4. **Create a short list based on your criteria.** Do what research you have to do to create a short-list of candidates. You can use the internet and phone to learn more and eliminate people from your list based on what is important to you. Or create multiple lists, for example doctors near by, or doctors you would see if you decide to travel.
5. **Do more thorough research on the doctors that made the short list.** Ask everyone again about these specific doctors. Have they published any research? Have they won any awards? Are they listed in America's Top Doctors?
6. **Compare your list** (plus research) to your criteria list and make a prioritized list. From this, you can set up appointments and see who you like.
7. **Trust Yourself.** When you meet with the doctor do you get a good feeling? Can you communicate with him/her easily? In the end you may have to trust yourself to this person. Can you see yourself doing that? If so, you probably have found a good doctor for you. If not, consider seeing someone else. Don't let other people tell you who you should see. Do the work yourself; be smart and do your homework, only you can decide who's right for you.