

Is Chiari a Disease?



The terms disease, disorder, condition, and malformation have become a source of conflict between doctors and patients. In particular, some physicians choose to be very precise in saying that Chiari is not a disease per se, because it is considered more a structural malformation than the type of disease which can be treated with drugs. Whether Chiari is a disease or not is open to semantic debate, but given what is at stake, it hardly seems worth arguing about, especially as such arguments poison the doctor-patient relationship.

If as a patient (or parent, spouse, etc.), you encounter a doctor who insists on correcting the use of the word disease, it is best to keep in mind the purpose of the visit and not react, or get into an argument. Although, you may want to consider whether a doctor who focuses on such a trivial item when dealing with a patient facing a serious health concern is the type of doctor you want.

If as a physician you encounter a patient or family member who repeatedly refers to Chiari as a disease, it is best to let it go. From the point of view of the patient and their family members, they are dealing with a disease, which may end up being a chronic one at that. Correcting a patient's use of the term disease is extremely counterproductive.

Source: Conquer Chiari: A Patient's Guide to the Chiari Malformation – Second Edition, page 33