

Trigeminal Neuralgia Association CENTRAL VALLEY, CALIFORNIA SUPPORT GROUP

(Counties of: ALPINE/AMADOR/CALAVERAS/FRESNO/MADERA/MARIPOSA/MERCED/MONO/SAN JOAQUIN/STANISLAUS/TUOLUMNE)

STRIKING BACK! Newsletter



FALL/WINTER 2007/2008



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TRIGEMINAL NEURALGIA ASSOCIATION

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www.endthepain.org

[IRS approved 501(c) (3) organization]

INSIDE:

→ REVIEW OF OCTOBER 6, 2007 MEETING
Gail Hutchens, Guest Speaker,
Shares Personal Story With You

→ UPCOMING GUEST SPEAKER:
JAMES E. BARNETT, M.D.

→ Reaching Out !  
Support Group Goes To MODESTO, CA
For Next Meeting!

MORE . . .

MESSAGES from Support Group
Leader, Co-Leader

DVDs from TNA Sixth National
Conference, Portland, Oregon
September 2007. AVAILABLE TO
YOU!!!

**GRACIOUS THANKS TO OUR DONORS/SUPPORT
GROUP MEMBERS/FAMILY & FRIENDS**

SUPPORT GROUP MEETINGS

February 2008 – date to be assigned

MODESTO

April 2008 - date to be assigned

STOCKTON

**DO YOU HAVE AN IDEA FOR OUR NEWSLETTER FORMAT?
SUBMIT YOUR ENTRY...see inside for details!!!**

By publication and dissemination of any informational materials, TNA (Trigeminal Neuralgia Association and/or TNA Central Valley California Support Group), neither endorses nor assumes any responsibility for the accuracy of the information contained therein. Any information is intended to provide you with what TNA believes to be current information on TN and possible modes of treatment and is being shared in an effort to keep you informed. Any information provided is not intended to constitute specific medical advice and should not be relied on as such by you without consultation with your own physicians.



GUEST SPEAKER SHARES HER PERSONAL TN/FACIAL PAIN STORY... I would like to thank the TNA Central Valley Support Group and Carlin, Group Leader, for inviting me to speak at their October 6, 2007 meeting about my personal experience with TN/facial pain. **It was my pleasure to meet everyone and spend time with you!**

For over five years I suffered in excruciating pain, yet seeing numerous doctors. During those five years I took two prescribed medications (Neurontin and Gabapentin) as I went in and out of remission several times. April 2007: despite the large doses of these medications, my pain was not reducing. I called my primary doctor and told him it was time for me to get referred to a neurosurgeon. I had reviewed the various options open to me and decided that a MVD [microvascular decompression] was my best option.

I met with Dr. Allen D. Efron, a neurosurgeon at Kaiser Permanente in Santa Clara, California, on April 25th. Dr. Efron reviewed my case, explaining the pros and cons of a MVD. After listening to all his information, I made the decision to proceed! My surgery took place on May 7th and I came home from the hospital on May 9th...**pain free!!!!**

Let me tell you, **“this is the best decision I have ever made; I have gotten my life back!”** I have had no problems or pain since the surgery.

Unfortunately, I was led to believe that MVD was a last resort. In my case, I can surely testify, this is not so! My only regret is that I waited so long to have the surgery.

I made a promise to myself that if I survived the surgery, **I would go out and talk to people about my experience and this is what I will continue to do.** **If you have any questions, I am available to listen to you!** Contact me at phone: (925) 240-1950 or email:

ghutchens@msn.com.

Regards, GAIL HUTCHENS, Support Group Member

TO CONTACT DR. EFRON:

Allen D. Efron, M.D., 1150 Veterans Blvd., Redwood City, CA; phone: (650) 299-2290

Email: www.kp.org/mydoctor/allenefron

MODESTO SUPPORT GROUP MEETING

JAMES E. BARNETT, M.D. and STANISLAUS SURGICAL HOSPITAL

Look forward to sharing information and conversation at an upcoming support group meeting [to be scheduled February 2008, in Modesto]. Attend, sit back and relax as you listen to Dr. Barnett as he **Welcomes TNA Central Valley Support Group!**

Educated in Germany 1967, Dr. Barnett then attended Arizona State Univ., Tempe, Arizona 1975, with a BSN, College of Nursing. In Bridgeport, Connecticut 1978, Dr. Barnett received Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist and in 1984 attended the Ross University School of Medicine, Dominica West Indies. University of Connecticut, New Britain General Hospital 1983-1986 Internal Medicine; and Buffalo General Hospital 1986-1988 as Chief Resident Anesthesia.

Dr. Barnett's Certification and Awards: Chief Resident, Anesthesiology, SUNY at Buffalo, 1988; and certified in 2000 by American Board of Pain Medicine, and more!

DR. BARNETT SHARES HIS LIFE WITH YOU...

“After a long career in Medicine, I [Dr. Barnett] took the opportunity to focus on chronic pain management. Only a multidisciplinary approach would be helpful to patients”. Providing 24-hour care, supervising several physicians, nurse practitioners and over twenty other office staff members; and owns 10% of Stanislaus Surgical Hospital, Modesto, CA. Dr. Barnett's wife, Susan, is a registered nurse; he is father to three (3) teenage girls!!

Lecturing has also been a major part of Dr. Barnett's practice resulting in the development, diversity, multiple board certifications and longevity in the community.

For further information regarding Dr. Barnett and/or a copy of his Curriculum Vitae, please contact Dr. Barnett's office at:

Stockton Pain Medical Center, 3031 W. March Lane, Suite 101, Stockton, CA 95219; phone: (209) 951-5960.

OR Valley Interventional Pain Med. Group, 1524 McHenry Ave., Modesto, CA 95350; phone: (209) 571-1693.









The 'Write' Way to Reduce Stress... When taking a deep breath and counting to 10 aren't enough to stem your pain, try putting pen to paper. **Write or email us!** Take a few minutes each day, during your pain strikes OR when you are not in pain, too! Find a place where you won't be distracted, and pour out your feelings. Hey, get out the Crayola~Crayons and draw, doodle, something! Contact: Carol or Carlin.

SUBMIT YOUR ENTRY FOR NEWSLETTER FORMAT!!

Win a 'Striking Back' book, autographed by Kenneth Casey, M.D., and goodies from our local support group donors! Are you computer-savvy? Build a webpage for our local group? **HELP!!!**

Contact: Carol or Carlin. **HELP, WE NEED SOMEBODY, HELP, NOT JUST ANYBODY...YOU!!!**

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!!

Carol Belluomo	Member of TNA/Power of Partnership Campaign, Support Group Co-Leader
Great Spectacles /Lynda Winter, A.B.O.C. (209) 955-7570	Member of TNA/Power of Partnership Campaign 
Marie Callender's Restaurant & Bakery/Ynes Rios & Staff (209) 952-0054	Beautiful luncheon room & excellent service on October 6, 2007 for meeting  
Earleen & Curt Hambrick of Arkansas in honor of their son, Scott Hambrick	Donation. Scott is a TN/facial pain sufferer, had surgical procedures; remains in pain and taking medications. WE ARE HERE FOR YOU, SCOTT and EARLEENE & CURT!!!
Carlin Lagrutta	Donation
Rosafina Lagrutta	Donation
Heather Maddalon	Donation
Carol Muller	Donation
Diane Nevins	Donation. Diane's mother, Fran Casey, suffered from TN/facial pain. Fran passed away February 2007. <u>OUR CONDOLENCES TO DIANE & HER FAMILY.</u>
Robin's Travel Connections (209) 474-7383	Donation of pens and 2008 year-pocket-calendars for everyone at October '07 meeting!    ...for all your travel needs!!!
Camie Tamraz	Donation
Support Group Members	Free-will basket donation at October 6, 2007 meeting

HELLO/WELCOME/GET WELL WISHES

MARIA CLERC is a new member and attended meeting on 10/6/07. Maria's TN/facial pain has returned after 15 years' remission; she has been busy reading 'Striking Back' book autographed by Dr. Kenneth Casey.

RENEE KENNER-JAUREZ is a new member. Renee and her husband, Hipolito, attended 10/6/07 meeting. Terrific to hear and listen from a family supporter—thank you, Hipolito!

MAY EVERSOLE, support group member has been hospitalized due to personal illness. A card wishing May a speedy recovery, release from the hospital and our thoughts has been sent to her. GET WELL, MAY!!

JEAN MACOMBER, and her family friend Karen, *traveled from Arnold* to join us at Marie Callender's for October meeting. WOW! Everyone was pleased to meet the both of you; your input, knowledge, care and consideration.

JEAN: *your pain has ended!!* (MVD in 2007).



GREAT SPECTACLES, Lynda Winter & Staff, Tara and Shannon, 622 Lincoln Center, Stockton, CA 95207; phone: (209) 955-7570, is a proud and continuous donor to our local support group and TNA National. Please, stop by Great Spectacles and browse through the beautiful boutique and get a professional fitting for your eyeglass frame needs! Lynda's credentials {A.B.O.C.} American Board of Optician Certified.

www.greatspectacles.com

EYEGLASSES	A.D. 20	A.D. 60	Late 13 th Century
About 170 million Americans wear glasses. It is impossible, figuratively and literally, to picture a world without glasses.	Seneca the Younger reads "all the books in Rome" through a glass globe filled with water to produce a magnifying effect.	Emperor Nero watches gladiatorial combats through an emerald held up to his eye.	First true spectacles believed to be invented by Pisan monk.
1352	1780's	1952	2007 & the New Year 2008
First artistic representation of eyeglasses shows up in a painting. Frames that use the wearer's ears for anchors followed several hundred years later.	Benjamin Franklin, who wanted to see things both near and far with the same pair of glasses, credited with developing bifocals.	The first stereoscopic 3-D feature film. And goofy red and blue specs on your nose.	GREAT SPECTACLES is available to assist you with all your eyeglass frame needs!!

AAA Via/June 2007 used as reference

TNA AUSTRALIA 2nd National Conference Sept. 2007, South Molle Island, Whitsunday, Queensland. *(Courtesy of Irene Wood, TNA NSW Sydney CBD Support Group Leader /November 2007 Newsletter).*

Speaker: Professor Marshall Devor, of Israel, on TN Ignition Hypothesis. [‘IW’ refers to Irene Wood; ‘MD’ refers to Professor Devor].

IW: The biopsy sample of MVD patient showed the nerve fibers in close appositions – nerve fibers touching one another without the insulating sheath (demyelization) – the anatomical basis for cross talk/cross excitation to take place.

MD: **It’s more than that. The demyelination allows Na⁺ channels to be inserted ectopically in the axon, rendering it electrically hyper excitable locally, an ectopic impulse generator.**

IW: Chemical cross talk = cross excitations – occurs at nerve injury site and sensory ganglion.

MD: **Yes. But electrical (ephaptic) crosstalk apparently only occurs among axons, not among ganglion cell bodies.**

IW: The amplification is: one fibre cross exciting many neighboring fibres (indirectly) at the injured nerve site as well as within the ganglion (cross excitation amplification).

MD: **Yes, by chemical and electrical cross excitation. There may be transient CNS amplification (central sensitization) as well.**

IW: In trigeminal neuralgia, the ganglion is hyper excitable due to the vascular compression.

MD: **In most patients the ganglion is hyper excitable probably due to the axonal injury, which in turn is due to the vascular compression. Some may have direct ganglion damage.**

IW: The trigger therefore sets off spontaneous ectopic firing, which then leads to an explosion of activities in the ganglion (the compression site).

MD: **It’s not exactly spontaneous if it’s set off, but once set off it runs on its own. This probably occurs in the ganglion and the root injury site.**

IW: If anatomical basis for ephaptic cross talk and cross excitation is the cross apposition of nerve fibres (due to the loss of the myelin) then perhaps re-myelination of these nerve fibres would minimize such phenomenon?

MD: **Chemical cross excitation does NOT require close apposition, only electrical. Yes, remyelination is certainly good and should promote pain relief.**

IW: If membrane stabilizer reduces the tendency of a nerve cell to fire – a membrane stabilizer drug applied topically to the site of trigger should reduce more quickly such ectopic firing. And, if we minimize the ectopic firing, minimize the cross excitation then, perhaps, there would be NO pain. And if all is so simple ~ I could retire tomorrow.

MD: **Yes, but how do you get the drug topically to the ganglion and/or root? An indwelling catheter and pump system would probably work great, but this is technically tricky.**

IW: IF membrane stabilizer can suppress the tendency of peripheral nerve fibres to fire, then why do TN patients, who are on daily doses of such drugs, still get attacks? I am guessing you probably will say the ‘fine edge’ – depending which way we push it. My argument is that if there is a saturation of membrane stabilizer – the fibres should not fire at all.

MD: **I think it’s simply a problem of dose. If you could increase the dose enough, the attacks would probably stop completely. The trouble is you would probably be asleep full time. I’ve argued that since the sleepiness of CNS and the pain of PNS, it should be possible to develop a PNS-active membrane-stabilizing drug that doesn’t pass the blood-brain barrier. I have no ability to design and build drugs; however, so this remains just an idea (but a good one!).**

IW: Why does pain break through?

MD: **Drug does not high enough to cover the pain mountain peaks.**

IW: And, when one achieves no pain state – would it be wiser to stay on a minimum dose of the drug than to come off it completely?

MD: **A delicate game . . . balancing dose, effect and side effects. No easy answer.**

IW: Irene’s thoughts: So, which came first? The chicken or the egg? – As in the nerve injury or the injury in the ganglion – re: ignition hypothesis for TN.

MD: **It presumably varies from patient to patient. Injuring an axon automatically affects the cell body in the TRG. Injuring the cell body also affects the cell body (and the axon, but I’m not sure that TRG injury causes ectopic firing to originate in the axon). For root compression the axonal injury comes first; but RG changes follow automatically and rapidly, and both locations may contribute to ignition. If forced, I would guess that most of the action is at the axon. If the primary injury is to the RG, the TRG is probably primary.**

MESSAGES. . .



Our support group enjoyed a wonderful afternoon on October 6, 2007. *What made it so wonderful? **ALL OF YOU!!*** We welcomed new members; introduced a delightful guest speaker, and Marie Callender's Restaurant & Bakery provided us with a private dining room and excellent service.

GAIL HUTCHENS, thank you for traveling from Brentwood to join us. I appreciate that you shared your personal TN/facial pain story, microvascular decompression surgery, and your sense of humor! *Your pain has ended, Gail!*

MARIE CALLENDER'S RESTAURANT & BAKERY, 2628 March Lane, Stockton, CA 95207; (209) 952-0054. Thank you, YNES RIOS & STAFF, for serving excellent food with care and attention to our needs.

My special thanks to Carol Belluomo, Support Group Co-Leader, and Chairpersons: Rosafina Lagrutta, Patty & Sarah Leary, Carol Muller and Camie Tamraz. *Meetings would not be a success without the continued assistance, participation and support from each of you.*

TNA, Gainesville, Florida, "Where would I [Carlin] be without YOU?" I appreciate and admire each staff member.

TNA gives me strength and resources to proceed in the effort towards..."**ending the pain**". ☺ ☺

We could learn a lot from one another. Some are in horrific pain and some have discovered a way to end their pain, and some are dull from medications. We are all different in our battle with TN/facial pain, but we all have had to live in the same paradox. It may be that your purpose in life is simply to serve as a warning to others.

Peace and Happy New Year,

Carlin Lagrutta

TNA Central Valley California Support Group Leader



Hello to my fellow TN sufferers and family supporters & friends. I want to share what I have been going through. I believe it helps others to know...*you are not alone.*

In May 2007 I had a serious bout of TN while on a cruise to Alaska. {See Summer 2007 Newsletter} About two months later, my pain reduced somewhat and I remained on Tegretol at 300 mgs per day, and completely stopped the Gabapentin 300 mgs. [aka Neurontin]. Recently, while moving into my new house and getting ready for Christmas my pain returned, again. *I wonder if stress is a trigger for me? ?* Presently, December 2007, I am taking Tegretol at 1200 mgs a day and Gabapentin 1800 mgs. Since re-starting these medications, I've been sick to my stomach; regurgitation of my daily meals. Is it the medications or something I ate at a Christmas celebration I went to the night before? I don't know, but morning nausea seems to be subsiding. I remain light-headed, but hope all will be better for me soon as my body adjusts to the medication intake.

"Be kinder than necessary, for everyone you meet is fighting some kind of battle." {Author unknown}

Carol Belluomo

TNA Central Valley California Support Group Co-Leader

DVDS FROM TNA SIXTH NATIONAL CONFERENCE, SEPTEMBER 2007 PORTLAND, OREGON



Watch DVDs In Your Home

Examples of some titles available to you for checkout from our local support group library: Medical Management of Trigeminal Neuralgia, Microvascular Decompression Surgery, Radiosurgery, Balloon Compression, Motor Cortex Stimulation for Neuropathic Facial Pain Conditions, Dental Connection, Complementary & Alternative Medicine including Chinese medicine, chiropractic, mind/body interventions, and so much more! Please contact Carlin at (209) 464-7171 or carlin.stockton.tna.support@comcast.net to borrow a DVD.

DO YOU KNOW/REALIZE HOW FAR OUR LOCAL SUPPORT GROUP REACHES OUT TO? For instance, the Hambrick Family is from Arkansas! Yet, in need of support in their area, this family graciously donated to TNA Central Valley CA Support Group...WOW!! Trigeminal Neuralgia/facial pain could, very likely, strike someone you know. PLEASE, do not hesitate to be a foreperson and do what you can. \$1.00, \$10.00, \$100.00...will help us to **END THE PAIN!!**

“Why do you sit there looking like an envelope without any address on it?”

Mark Twain

This is how you can address your envelope to support TNA National and TNA Central Valley California Support Group. . .

A tax-exempt non-profit organization is an organization approved by the IRS under section 501(c)(3). Gifts to a 501(c)(3) organization are generally tax-deductible and its income is generally exempt from taxation. The **IRS approved Trigeminal Neuralgia Association as a national tax-exempt organization**. Unfortunately, that tax-exempt status *is not available for use by local groups*. If a donor wants to contribute toward the group's expenses, etc., and they want the contribution to be tax-deductible, they must make their check to: “ TNA/CENTRAL VALLEY CA SG” . The donor can give the check to the Support Group Leader to mail to TNA or mail it directly to TNA. TNA will, in turn, write a check to the Support Group for the amount noted on the donor check and send acknowledgment to the donor for the contribution.

For contributions made payable to TNA/Central Valley California SG, please mail to:

TNA/Central Valley CA SG, c/o C. Lagrutta, 150 E. Fargo Street, Stockton, CA 95204

ANY QUESTIONS DO NOT HESITATE TO CONTACT:

CARLIN LAGRUTTA, Support Group Leader at (209) 464-7171; carlin.stockton.tna.support@comcast.net

CAROL BELLUOMO, Support Group Co-Leader at (209) 358-9475; cbelluomo@sbcglobal.net

-Or-

TRIGEMINAL NEURALGIA ASSOCIATION
ATTN: JANE BOLES, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR/CEO
925 NORTHWEST 56th TERRACE PLACE, SUITE C
GAINESVILLE, FLORIDA 32605
(800) 923-3608

www.endthepain.org

Attempted To Explain Your Facial Pain To A Doctor? Written off as a hypochondriac who spends too much time reading medical articles? But, you were right!! If you say anything more technical or use the proper medical term, the physician concludes you are a hypochondriac, not an intelligent person who researched trigeminal neuralgia/facial pain symptoms. ***THERE IS HELP...TNA's ALANA GRECA, R.N.***, is available to answer your phone calls and email messages. Nurse Alana provides personal and in-depth support. You may contact Alana Greca, R.N. at patient-line (352)-331-7002 or (800) 929-3608. Nurse Alana's email address is: agreca@tna-support.org.

LOOKING FOR A TNA SUPPORT GROUP?

As a courtesy to support group members, listed below is other TNA Support Groups in California. ***You are invited to contact the Support Group Leaders, and attend meetings.***

AREA	TNA SUPPORT GROUP LEADER	PHONE	EMAIL
North San Francisco Bay Area	John C. Porter	510-865-8751	John.C.Porter@uscg.mil
San Francisco-San Jose	Emily Diaz	408-427-1599	iemily@mac.com
San Francisco-San Jose	Bennett Bloomfield	650-573-6292	chiefbmb@yahoo.com
San Diego	Cherie Sato	760-729-8987	ticnews@sbcglobal.net
Sacramento	Susan Ray	916-435-9885	srray1156@yahoo.com

CHANGE OF MAILING ADDRESS/PHONE/EMAIL?

NEW CHANGES LISTED BELOW



NAME	ADDRESS	PHONE	EMAIL
CAROL BELLUOMO TNA Central Valley CA SG Co-Leader	<u>2200 Bridgewater Street</u> <u>Atwater, CA 95301</u>	209-358-9475	cbelluomo@sbcglobal.net

Please make note of the above updated information AND contact Carlin or Carol if **YOU HAVE ANY CHANGE OF INFORMATION.**



TRIGEMINAL NEURALGIA ASSOCIATION REGIONAL CONFERENCE

TN & Chronic Facial Pain, at University of California/San Diego's Skaggs School of Pharmacy, La Jolla, CA [postponed from 10/27/07 due to devastating Southern California fires] is re-scheduled for

SATURDAY, JANUARY 26th, 2008 hosted by JOHN F. ALKSNE, M.D. An outstanding group of professionals have been invited to speak. They include an orofacial pain specialist, anesthesiologist, a neurologist, a nurse, a psychologist, neurosurgeons, a radiologist, an upper cervical chiropractor, a nutritionist, and the TNA Executive Director/CEO, Jane Boles. Please contact Carlin **OR** SHELLY WILSON, TNA's Conference Chairperson, P.O. Box 92604, Southlake, TX 76092; email: swilson@tna-support.org.

ARE YOU ASKING YOURSELF, "WHY SHOULD I ATTEND THE CONFERENCE?" ANSWER: Patients and supporters interested in developing an understanding of face pain resulting from trigeminal neuralgia and other neuropathic facial pain conditions, its diagnosis and treatment. I HOPE TO SEE YOU THERE! {Carlin}.



We hope this newsletter will encourage you to take advantage of the resources provided by TNA NATIONAL, Gainesville, Florida, and TNA CENTRAL VALLEY CALIFORNIA SUPPORT GROUP.

WISHING YOU = PAIN FREE!!

Sincerely,

TNA Central Valley CA Support Group Board

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

TNA CENTRAL VALLEY, CALIFORNIA SUPPORT GROUP MEETING

DATE: February 2008 (We will advise you of exact date/time)

PLACE: STANISLAUS SURGICAL HOSPITAL
1421 OAKDALE ROAD
MODESTO, CA 95355
Conference Room (facing E. Orangeburg Avenue)

GUEST SPEAKER: **JAMES E. BARNETT, M.D.**
<http://www.stanislaussurgical.com/content/html>

DIRECTIONS: Contact: **CAMIE TAMRAZ**, TNA Central Valley CA SG Research Chairperson at
  (209) 531-2232

NORTH HIGHWAY 99

Bear **right** onto **Mitchell Road**
Road name changes to **El Vista Avenue**
Road name changes to **Oakdale Road**
Arrive at **1421 Oakdale Road on the left**. Last intersection is E. Orangeburg Ave. {If you reach St. Pauls Way, you've gone too far!}.

SOUTH HIGHWAY 99

Exit 229, take ramp **right** and follow signs for **Briggsmore Avenue/Carpenter Road**
Turn **left** onto **West Briggsmore Avenue/North Carpenter Road**
Road name changes to **East Briggsmore Avenue**
Turn **right** onto **Oakdale Road**
Arrive at **1421 Oakdale Road on the right**; last intersection is St. Pauls Way. {If you reach E. Orangeburg Avenue, you've gone too far!}.

There are many TN/facial pain sufferers in our areas such as Counties of Alpine, Amador, Calaveras, Fresno, Madera, Mariposa, Merced, Mono, San Joaquin, Stanislaus, and Tuolumne.

[The need to reach out to the many is our journey.](#)

We will advise you of EXACT DATE/TIME for MEETING IN MODESTO!

KEEP CHECKING YOUR MAILBOX ~ ~ ~   OR EMAIL 
OR A TELEPHONE CALL  .

Do not hesitate to contact anyone of us if you have any questions~~ (see first page for contact information). *We look forward to seeing you soon.*

TNA CENTRAL VALLEY CA SUPPORT GROUP BOARD