



PROMOTING YOUR GROUP

A VSGN LEADERSHIP DISCUSSION

Feb. 18, 2016

Guest speaker: Wilma Ruskin - Acoustic Neuroma Association, New Jersey

- Holds meetings in a hospital - gives credibility to her group, and the hospital promotes the group in their newsletter.
- Has a website so people can find her; also uses it to communicate with current members.
- Distributes a newsletter; another way to communicate with current members and keep them engaged.
- Holds a mini-conference every other year.
- Some meetings have a guest speaker; others are "care & share" (open discussion). Announces this in advance.
- Became a 501(c) 3; has a board of directors and medical advisory board - essentially a team of volunteers who help with logistics and decision-making.
- Members can elect to share their information with other members (patient directory).

Advertise:

- Run a free ad in the community section of the local paper before you form the group to gauge the interest.
- Once the group starts to meet continue to advertise (for free) upcoming meetings in the local paper (community section).
- Cultivate relationships with area paper editors and "pitch" sharing your personal story in an article, which can also promote the group.
- Contact local radio stations - they may announce your group as a public service announcement, and/or interview you telling your story.
- Craigslist - community events/activities.
- Meetup.com.

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- Facebook - create a community page where you can announce your group meetings. You might also share posts from other related Facebook pages, like VeDA's.
- Fliers - public bulletin boards, senior centers, libraries, coffee shops.
- Local social networks - e.g. chamber of commerce mixers, church bulletins, community papers (e.g. senior center newsletters).
- List your support group meeting dates on VEDA's support group calendar (email to info@vestibular.org).

Promote:

- Write letters to ENTs and other specialists in your area and include a simple flyer that they can post in their waiting room or make available to patients with your contact information. Repeat periodically so that they know your group is still active, and send them reminders about each meeting.
- VeDA will send out an e-blast to people in our database who are located within 60 miles of your SG meeting location two weeks before each meeting. Let us know in advance if you are having a guest speaker. [Update: VeDA includes VSGN support groups in their monthly e-newsletter but does not send out customized emails.]

Create a website:

- There are many free and easy tools to help you (e.g. WordPress).
- A central place for contact and meeting info.
- Create a blog where you summarize guest speaker presentations.
- Communication:
 - Send a standard "welcome" email to all who inquire about the group.
 - Send reminder emails to your group members one week before the meeting with the discussion topic.
 - Communicate personally with your members; collect their contact information.
 - In outreach, use "dizziness" and "imbalance" in your communication; some people might not know what "vestibular" means.

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