

# THIS SEPTEMBER | “BEE” Aware of Brain Aneurysms



**By Jill Valecce**

Last year, I traveled to Washington DC with a delegation of doctors, scientists, survivors and others to advocate for Brain Aneurysm awareness and research and to promote Ellie’s Law—legislation named for a seven- year-old girl who died following a ruptured brain aneurysm, to provide ongoing dedicated research funding, critical intervention and better treatments for this often overlooked but devastating disease. It was an important trip for me and a personal one; I had suffered a ruptured brain aneurysm in 2016 and know how blessed I am to be here, recovering and able to advocate for Brain Aneurysm awareness.

It is estimated that more than six million—one in every 50 Americans has an unruptured brain aneurysm, a weakened blood vessel in the brain that can balloon and fill with blood. While many go undetected, about 30,000 Americans a year will experience a rupture, and more than half them will be disabled or die. Every 18 minutes a rupture occurs—they are spontaneous, traumatic, often fatal and for those who do survive, cataclysmic on the brain, resulting in motor and cognitive deficits. The symptoms of a rupture include severe headache, nausea, blurred vision, stiff neck, drooping eyelids and seizures and often are misdiagnosed as a stroke or brain tumor. Education and understanding of the signs and symptoms can save lives. Knowing if you are at risk can prompt preemptive care and preventative treatments. Brain Aneurysms are very often genetic; if a family member has had an aneurysm—you have an increased risk and should inform your doctors.

As I have recovered, I have learned a great deal about brain aneurysms, and have become involved with the Bee Foundation, an organization founded in 2014 to honor Jennifer Sedney, who died at the age of 27 from a ruptured brain aneurysm. The Bee Foundation endeavors to increase awareness of the risk factors and signs of brain aneurysms, and provide research grants and fellowships to fund innovative diagnostics and treatments. September is Brain Aneurysm Awareness Month, for more information, visit [www.thebeefoundation.org](http://www.thebeefoundation.org) and “Bee” inspired!

## BRAIN ANEURYSM RISK FACTORS

- Smoking
- Hypertension
- Family history
- Age-over 40
- Gender-Women at greater risk
- Presence of an arteriovenous malformation (AVM)
- Drug and Alcohol use
- Infection
- Arterial Abnormalities
- Head trauma

## WARNING SIGNS

- Localized Headache
- Dilated Pupils
- Blurred vision
- Pain above and behind the eye
- Weakness/Numbness
- Difficulty Speaking

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