

Finding a Qualified Physician

(By Dr. John Bilezikian, Dr. Michael A. Levine, and James Sanders)

Several times a year we receive requests to find a physician who is experienced treating patients diagnosed with hypoparathyroidism. This article is intended to help you find a physician who will be able to help you deal with hypoparathyroidism in a responsible and effective way. Ultimately, you will have to make your own choices based on what you are able to find, and you will have to decide for yourself if you want to travel some distance in order to see a physician.

Primary Care Physician

The best physicians are those who are not only interested in you as a patient but also as a person. The ideal relationship should be one where you and your physician are partners in your care. With that kind of relationship you should be able to communicate new information about your condition in a bilateral way. This becomes even more important if you happen to have more than one medical problem to deal with, such as hypothyroidism and hypoparathyroidism.

When Jim Sanders selected his primary care physician years ago, he spent his first appointment interviewing the physician. He explained all the medical issues with his new physician would be dealing with. While his physician replied he did not know very much about hypoparathyroidism, he was willing to learn. Because he was concerned about Jim as a whole patient, and not just his parathyroid glands (or lack thereof!), he was able to more effectively take care of all of Jim's medical needs. He assisted Jim when they had to seek specialty care, and followed up to ensure their needs were met.

We feel each of you can find your own primary care physician, just as Jim did. You might have to "interview" many physicians before you decide who you want to "hire," but you will find the right one for you and your family.

Medical Schools

Good sources for specialist endocrine care are the physician staffs at local medical schools or academic medical centers. These centers exist in almost every state, and in many countries around the world. The larger, more prominent, medical schools are more likely to offer you the best chances of finding an endocrinologist who not only has an interest in hypoparathyroidism but also understands the complexities of the disorder and how to properly manage it.

The best approach is to ask your primary care physician to make inquiries for you and to arrange for a referral. We have found medical schools were more apt to work with a primary care physician than with individual patients, especially if the ultimate goal is to have physicians associated with the medical school see the patient for help in diagnosing and treating hypoparathyroidism.

Medical schools also have several divisions within the school which cover other medical disciplines, which is extremely valuable when you have more than one medical problem to deal with.

American Association of Clinical Endocrinologists (AACE)

The AACE has a "Find an Endocrinologist" feature on their web site, which allows you search for an endocrinologist who specializes in various endocrine categories, in our case "parathyroid disorders." This would be a good place to continue your search for someone who can help you, but please keep in mind

you may have to travel some distance to see them. We suggest you contact the office of any of the physicians listed to see if they would have the necessary experience to meet your needs.

Since many endocrinologists deal primarily with diabetes you will most likely have to make several inquiries before you find someone suitable to your needs. Be patient, because this is yet another step in finding the right physician for “you.”

The National Institutes of Health (NIH)

The NIH, located in Bethesda, Maryland, is part of the health system of the United States government and is a tremendous resource for both the patient and physicians. The Hypoparathyroidism Association, Inc. exists today because of Jim’s experiences in participating in clinical trials conducted by the NIH in the 1990’s to determine if parathyroid hormone replacement therapy was a viable treatment for hypoparathyroidism. Not only do they have several world renowned experts in hypoparathyroidism, they have experts in nearly every other medical specialty and interest associated with that valuable institute.

We have found, from our experience, that physicians associated with the NIH are not only very knowledgeable when it comes to hypoparathyroidism and other medical concerns they are more than willing to help primary care physician worldwide with their patient’s care. If it becomes necessary, patients can be referred to the NIH, either as an outpatient or as an inpatient for further evaluation.

Medical Advisors to the Hypoparathyroidism Association

Another resource we recommend are the medical advisors to our Association. They are especially valuable if you happen to live near one of them, or are willing to travel. Most of them would be able to see you as a patient, and most of them accept most insurance plans or Medicare and Medicaid in the United States.

Your Ultimate Goal

Each of us wants to have a physician who not only understands hypoparathyroidism but knows how to properly manage the disorder in their patients. Jim’s physician acknowledged he did not know very much about hypoparathyroidism when Jim first interviewed him many years ago, but he told him he was willing to learn. By working with experts within our association and experts in leading institutions and in private practice throughout the United States and the world, your primary care physician can learn what your physician needs to know so he will be in a much better position to take care of your day to day needs. Let us know if he needs our assistance.

In the end, this becomes a WIN-WIN situation for each of us and especially for you.

Additional Resources:

<http://www.hpth.org>

http://www.ehow.com/how_5068889_primary-care-physician.html

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Primary_care_physician

<http://www.doctorpremed.com/list-of-medical-schools.html>

<https://www.aace.com/resources/find-an-endocrinologist>

<http://www.nih.gov>