

*Barbara A.*

Common Factors® Advocate

*My life at a glance*

I live in New Jersey, where I teach at a local medical school. In my spare time, I enjoy visiting art galleries, sketching, and painting.

Despite knowing that something was wrong with my health for my entire life, it took a long time for me to connect the dots that I have Type 1 VWD. In 2004, through some of my own research of medical articles, I was able to recognize that my symptoms indicated that I might have a bleeding disorder. A visit to a regional hemophilia treatment center and a round of lab tests confirmed that I have VWD.

*As a speaker, preferred topics include*

When I speak, I like to use my story as an example of the importance of VWD education, particularly a thorough understanding of treatment options and management during all stages of life.

I believe that people leave my talks with a better understanding of the challenges of living with VWD. Today's doctors and healthcare professionals know much more about bleeding disorders than they used to, but there is very little awareness about VWD outside of the VWD community. That's why it is so important for people to feel empowered—I urge them to be vocal about their symptoms and needs.

I've also found that my clinical pharmacology teaching experience lends some credibility to my message. I can help participants understand how their bodies are affected by VWD treatments. At events, I like to reach out to the family members of those who have been diagnosed and encourage them to get tested if they haven't already. Many people who may have VWD prefer not to think about their symptoms. I want these people to realize there are treatment options available that can help them to live a healthier, more active life. I encourage those who are affected by VWD to take control of their condition—and I give them the educational tools they need to do it.

*My message to you*

*"Education and self-advocacy are the keys to staying healthy. There can never be too much awareness of VWD, so make sure your family, doctors, and friends are informed and educated."*

*-Barbara***Common  
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