

# HEALTH ADVOCACY TODAY- BEING YOU OWN EFFECTIVE ADVOCATE

**Medical Errors:** 3<sup>rd</sup> Leading Cause of Death in the United States ( John James, PHD- publisjed in September 2013 Journal of Patient Safety and Scientific American

The world Health Report 2000, *Health Systems: Improving Performance*, ranked the US health care system 37<sup>th</sup> in the world

**Misdiagnosed-** 10-30% of all diagnoses made in the US are **wrong** (Agency for Healthcare research and Quality)

**Most frequently misdiagnosed** (Joint commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations 2002):

Meningitis, cardiac disease (particularly heart attacks in women), pulmonary emboli (clots), asthma, neurologic disorders

**CONSIDER THIS:** By age 65, 7 out of 10 people will have more than 5 chronic illnesses- requiring complex evaluations and care strategies.

The average length of time with a physician- 8 to 15 minutes

Time for new medical discoveries to become commonly accepted? 17 years.

**As per the Rand Institute Study of Quality Healthcare (2004):** Adults receive only half the recommended levels of care recommended for their illness across the board

The Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations has recommended that every patient entering the hospital should have a patient advocate

**WHO IS THE BEST ADVOCATE FOR YOU? YOU ARE You are the center of your own healthcare!**

You must participate in all decisions about your treatment and healthcare

**HOW TO BEGIN TO ADVOCATE FOR YOURSELF? LEARN ABOUT YOUR CONDITION!**

National Institute of Health: [www.nih.gov](http://www.nih.gov)

Mayo Clinic: [www.mayoclinic.com](http://www.mayoclinic.com)

National Library of Medicine: [www.nlm.nih.gov](http://www.nlm.nih.gov)

**LEARN ABOUT ADVANCED MEDICAL KNOWLEDGE AND TREATMENTS:**

**Human Genome Project:** Dozens of new sciences opening doors of discovery and new therapies

**Systems Biology:** A new way of looking at our bodies- Everything is connected! All body systems are related by genetic and chemical feedback loops

**Functional Medicine Chronic Care Model/ Integrative Medicine-** Learn about the emerging new medicine dealing with chronic, degenerative and autoimmune illnesses- patient centered, finding/treating causes, not conditions, based on Systems Biology, personalized, pro-active, preventive. Your doctor may not be familiar with this emerging medical model and may dismiss your questions. Do not let that stop you!

**Integrative Medicine:** The synthesis of traditional western medicine and complementary or alternative medicine [www.nccam.nih.gov](http://www.nccam.nih.gov)

### **LEARN ABOUT YOUR MEDICATIONS!**

Medical errors are the most common healthcare mistakes: 106,000 deaths per year

Learn if there are natural options to accomplish the same results

Carry a list of your medications with you at all times!

“Is it the medications I am taking that are making me sick or is it the symptoms of the disease?”

[www.rxlist.com](http://www.rxlist.com) (type in drug name and then rxlist.com)- best source for drug info on actions, interactions, warnings and side effects)

[www.drugs.com](http://www.drugs.com) - best source for drug interactions

[www.nutritionreview.org/library/nutrientdepletion.php](http://www.nutritionreview.org/library/nutrientdepletion.php) - excellent source for nutrients blocked by medications

### **KNOW YOUR FAMILY HISTORY**

**Go To:** My family Health Portrait ([familyhistory.hhs.gov](http://familyhistory.hhs.gov))- fill out, save, update and distribute your family history to physicians and family members.

### **CHOOSING YOUR DOCTOR OR SURGEON**

All Doctors are Not Created Equal!

Remember that 50% of all doctors graduated in the bottom half of their class

Physician information can be obtained at your state’s medical/examining board” [www.fsbf.org/directory](http://www.fsbf.org/directory)

(AZ is [www.azmd.gov](http://www.azmd.gov))

### **RESEARCH THE HOSPITAL OR OTHER FACILITY:**

Ask about their Joint Commission rating on their quality standards

Compare hospital quality ratings at [www.consumerhealthratings.com](http://www.consumerhealthratings.com) or [www.healthgrades.com](http://www.healthgrades.com)

If possible, select a hospital that specializes in your particular condition or surgical need

Research the rehab/nursing home at [www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov) or [www.carepathways.com](http://www.carepathways.com) or [www.healthgrades.com](http://www.healthgrades.com)

### **BEFORE YOU MAKE BIG DECISIONS**

**Get a Second Opinion!** Maybe even a third (not in the same doctor group)

Fewer than 30% of people seek a second opinion- even about difficult, life altering decisions

### **PREPARING FOR YOUR SECOND OPINION**

Deliver your records yourself- do not expect efficient inter-office record transmittal

Bring your medical history (MEDiKEY)

Bring any pertinent films, MRI or CT discs, reports

Have a trusted friend and a tape recorder with you

Bring a list of well- considered questions and ask them all

### **GOING TO SURGERY?**

Ask to have your surgery as early in the day as possible

Read that surgical permit before you sign it

Make certain you really understand what is to be done

Prepare as well as possible:; nutrition immune support, probiotics, information about deep breathing and post surgical moving techniques/ambulation, nutrition (ask your RN Patient Advocate to help)

### **SO YOU ARE GOING TO THE HOSPITAL:**

**Bring a family member or friend as your advocate in the hospital;** they must stay with you! (they will need to sign a hospital release of information form so the doctors and nurses can legally speak with them about you)

**Ask the nurse to identify all medications before you take them**

Notify the nurse if anything looks odd (IV not dripping properly, etc)

Have your family/friend advocate make a list of questions daily for the doctor and ASK THEM

Make certain that everyone knows your allergies

Have your surgeon clearly mark the site of your upcoming surgery

MAKE CERTAIN THAT ALL DOCTORS, NURSES, OTHER HOSPITAL WORKERS WASH THEIR HANDS BEFORE TOUCHING YOU OR YOUR BED/BED TABLE/ PHONE/ TV REMOTE, etc

Also, ask your nurse and doctor to wipe their stethoscopes with alcohol before use

### **THINGS TO BRING**

Antibacterial wipes, your own water, your own pillow, travel size toiletries, your own body lotion, brush, comb, flip flops or non- skid slippers

**IT IS YOUR RIGHT TO REFUSE TREATMENT UNTIL YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT IS HAPPENING!!!**

**BE CURIOUS! BE SAFE!- No question is too simple. Ask questions until you fully understand the diagnosis, the treatment plan, the medications**

### **WHEN TO CONSULT YOUR INDEPENDENT RN PATIENT ADVOCATE (Irnpa)**

Facing a new diagnosis

Dealing with chronic illness- single or multiple

Wondering what your treatment options really are

Want to protect yourself in the medical system

Working with multiple doctors (communication often lacking)

RN Patient Advocates ADVOCATE ON YOUR BEHALF protecting your rights and safety. Your iRNPA will educate you and your family and guide you through the medical system

RN Patient Advocates are knowledgeable about all paradigms of Medicine: traditional western medicine, Functional Medicine, and Integrative Medicine

### **YOU CAN CALL YOUR iRNPA:**

To help make sense of your medications and current treatment plan

To help you understand what is happening to your body

To create your MEDiKEY, reducing your risk of medical error

To ensure the integrity of the diagnostic process. To research the full range of your treatment options so you can make the best choice for you

To help you explore the various ways you can achieve the highest level of well-being possible

**IMPORTANT WEBSITES TO HELP YOU BE YOUR OWN HEALTH ADVOCATE:**

[Patientadvocate.com](http://Patientadvocate.com) - will give you a thorough understanding of how/ when and independent RN Patient Advocate might best help you

[Functionalmedicine.org](http://Functionalmedicine.org) – will introduce you to key concepts about this emerging medicine that is devoted exclusively to chronic and autoimmune conditions as well as risk factor identification

[Arizonaadvancedmedicine.com/articles.html](http://Arizonaadvancedmedicine.com/articles.html) – this is a newsletter produced by Martha Gout, MD who has devoted her practice to both Functional and Integrative Medicine- very informative articles on a variety of subjects to help to be your own health advocate

[Integrativerd.org](http://Integrativerd.org) – this is a national website of the nutritionists who practice in the leading edge science of nutrition; you can learn more about this extremely important role and learn who in your area might be very helpful for you to consult as you create the nutrition plan suited to your own metabolic needs.

[Drweil.com](http://Drweil.com) – excellent articles on Integrative Medicine

[Jointcommission.org/speakup.aspx#](http://Jointcommission.org/speakup.aspx#) - this is a public information site with many tips on how to be your own health advocate

[Worstpills.org](http://Worstpills.org) – this is a research –based site that provides excellent and non-marketing information on pharmaceuticals, monitoring the world of Big Pharma; learn about the advisories from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) as well as warnings and affirmations about medications you may be taking now

YOUR HEALTH AND WELL BEING IS A PUZZLE. LEARN ALL THE PIECES YOU CAN TO BE YOUR OWN BEST ADVOCATE!