

Being a Patient Advocate For Yourself, Family, or a Friend

AT THE DOCTOR'S OFFICE

- Do not be afraid to ask questions.
- Write down questions for the doctor or healthcare practitioner. At the appointment, write down the answers.
- If you do not understand what a doctor is saying, ask for clarification.
- Make sure that the patient's goals for treatment or care are the same as the healthcare provider's goals.
- Ask about side effects of drugs and treatments, and how to manage them.
- Find out if there are new treatments that should be considered.
- Ask if there are any lifestyle changes that might better support your loved one's health goals.
- Find out if there are any products or services that would be helpful.
- If you use "complementary" or "integrative" healing modalities, let your doctor know about this.
- If a medication is not working (for pain or symptoms), ask for a different one, or request a consultation.
- Second opinions are usually covered by insurance.

IN THE HOSPITAL

- Most hospitals have Palliative Care teams. You need a doctor's referral to access this team. Anyone with a serious illness can get a referral, either as an inpatient or in some cases as an outpatient (UCSF, CPMC, and Kaiser). These teams are incredibly valuable.
- If your loved one or friend is in the hospital, it is beneficial to have someone present at most times, who can advocate by asking questions, getting the nurse, make sure the right medications are given at the right time, etc. A squeaky wheel gets the grease! There is no point in being a "good and quiet patient," if it means suffering.
 - In the hospital, things fall through cracks easily. You may need to remind someone about a consult or test, or you may need to speak with a doctor.
 - If you do not understand what is happening, ask to speak with the charge nurse, doctor, or case manager.

- DO NOT allow for a discharge to home without a solid plan.
- If you believe that the patient has needs that are not being addressed, you must help address them. If you are not the medical power of attorney for healthcare, make sure that whoever is, can be contacted easily.
- Have a copy of your DPOA/Advance Directive with you in the hospital.
- Sometimes you must request to see the doctor who is in charge, and not a resident.