

White Paper:

How to be an Empowered Patient

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Patient empowerment is all about participating in your own medical care. In fact, this type of medical culture is called Participatory Medicine. In it, patients and doctors work together to understand the patient's condition, understand the treatment options, and make a plan. Doctors are expected to educate patients, and present them with options. Patients are expected to educate themselves and invest themselves fully in their jointly created plans for health management. In other words, they are expected to follow through with their instructions. Welcome to medicine 2.0.

Here are some simple steps to becoming an empowered patient.

1. Choose your caregiver carefully.

- Work of mouth is a good indicator.
- It is particularly good to speak to people who work in health care.
- Use social media and the internet to expand your inquiry, though beware of bias. You may find a doctor's website Facebook page or Twitter feed. You may find reviews or comments.

2. Make sure your chosen provider is in your network. There are two ways to do this :

- Call the provider
- Call your insurance company or case worker.

3. Devise and obtain a medical record keeping system that you like. Try to keep it unified. Try not to have both paper and electronic methods.

- Paper, i.e. notebooks, files in filing cabinets, etc.

- Digital – smartphone data files that syncs with all your devices and backs up to the cloud. You can use apps that are specifically for medical data or software like Evernote that can keep any kind of data. Expect to have to use a scanner app or an actual scanner since few offices are without any kind of paper at all.

4. Obtain your family history. If you are adopted, this is challenging, but not impossible. If you are in contact with relatives, don't be surprised if some topics are sensitive. Proceed mindfully.

5. Obtain your own medical history. Speak to your parents about your childhood illnesses, injuries, allergies, and immunizations. Obtain your childhood records if possible.

6. Make careful observations about yourself. Pay attention to your habits regarding sleep, eating, drinking, physical activity, recreation, socializing and intimacy.

7. Identify your concerns.

8. Obtain special information that might be of use. For example, if you are interested in losing weight, keep a journal of your intake and activity for a couple weeks.

9. Find reputable sites on the internet and read up on topics which concern you. Choose noncommercial sites if possible. The CDC (Center for Disease Control) and NIH (National Institute of Health) are great starting places.

10. Review your insurance information to see what it does and does not cover.

11. Make your appointment, indicating what you want to discuss, allowing for enough time for all you want to discuss.

12. Send any pertinent materials in advance so the doctor will have time to review them before your appointment.

13. At your appointment, check in right when you arrive.

14. Bring a book or a tablet in case the doctor is running late. And notify the front office people if you have been waiting more than twenty minutes.

15. Realize there may be times when you have to be rescheduled. We realize there are times when you will have to reschedule.

15. Remind the nurse or doctor what you are there for.

16. Allow the doctor to take her history and do her physical before asking her to make any assessments. Once she is finished, ask for a preliminary or working assessment of your situation.

17. If you do not understand what is being said, ask.

18. Expect diagnostic studies like blood work and imaging to be ordered if there are active problems. Ask how long these take to get result back. Make sure you understand what each test is and why it is ordered. Ask how you are expected to learn the results.

19. Ask how a plan is to be established and what is the follow up.

20. Get a copy of your visit notes if you like.

Congratulations to taking your first steps to Health 2.0.