NAVIGATING THE HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

Beth Windisch, LISW-S
The content contained in this presentation/discussion is not intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Always seek the advice of your physician or other qualified health provider with any questions you may have regarding a medical condition.

Also, that is me in the picture on the flyer – just a few years ago
Everyone deserves access to high-quality medical care. But in such a complex healthcare environment, many people can feel as though they are getting lost in the system.
WORDS WORTH KNOWING

- Health
- Healthcare
- Health Literacy
- Self-Advocacy
- Primary Care Provider (PCP)
- Internist
- Referral
- Urgent Care
- Emergency Room
Health Literacy

ESSENTIAL FOR
HEALTHCARE
NAVIGATION

Self-Advocacy
HEALTH LITERACY

1. Knowing what to expect as you move through the health care system AND as you interact with health care professionals

2. Having the skills to successfully navigate the health care system, including communicating effectively with health care professionals and skills for self advocacy
Being a self-advocate means learning how to be direct about what you think you may need in terms of your health. It also means listening and learning from your health care providers, all of whom are experts in their fields. From these discussions, you and your providers can develop a plan that works for you.
A good self-advocate is able to tell others what they think, feel and need

- Ask questions and ask providers to repeat themselves
- Tell the medical professionals what they need to know
- Don’t assume that because they are a doctor or a medical professional that they know what’s going on with you
TIPS FOR SELF-ADVOCACY

- Be Self-Aware. In order to advocate for yourself, you need to know yourself, including your disability
- Know your needs
- Practice Assertiveness
- Develop Self-Confidence
- Utilize Support
SELF-ADVOCACY RESOURCES
WEBSITES

http://www.ohiosilc.org/centers-for-independent-living/

https://www.disabilityrightsohio.org/resource-center

https://www.sabeusa.org/resources/
Appointments: Prior to scheduling appointment, visit the website or call the healthcare facility to verify Covid-19 guidelines, directions, location of office, arrival time, and paperwork needed. If special accommodations or assistance are needed for your appointment, discuss with a representative within the healthcare system or provider’s office. If for any reason the appointment cannot be kept, be courteous by calling to reschedule.

Virtual Visits: Request virtual visits with provider. Many healthcare systems are offering virtual visits as an alternative due to Covid-19. You will need an electronic device to access the appointment.

Person of Trust: Bring a trustworthy support person for appointments that are complex in nature. The support person can take notes and clarify next steps and questions to the provider.
Financial Obstacles: Express to the provider financial barriers that may prevent continued services or medication recommendations. There are programs available to assist patients with medication assistance and billing concerns.

Second Opinion: Request a second opinion for health problems or treatments. A second opinion allows you to make decisions that are well informed. Requesting such service is not a reflection of the provider. It’s important to be knowledgeable. Providers will support this decision.

Medical Record Access: Patients may have one free copy of the medical record, in print or on a CD. Take advantage of access to your medical record in the form of e-chart. E-chart allows you to communicate with your provider and review visit notes, lab results, and future appointments.
Document Interactions: Document all interactions with provider, office, pharmacy, and billing staff. Keep a journal and document date, time, person, or department and content discussed. Request clarification if content or language is complex.

As a Patient Advocate, I encourage you to apply these tips to coordinate your care and assist with obstacles that may present while navigating healthcare systems.
IN SUMMARY

- Know yourself
- Be Prepared
- Assertive but calm
- Ask questions
“When I was a boy and I would see scary things in the news, my mother would say to me, ‘Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping.’ To this day, especially in times of ‘disaster,’ I remember my mother’s words, and I am always comforted by realizing that there are still so many helpers — so many caring people in this world.” — Fred Rogers (It’s Sesame)
Any Questions