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# ROLE OF THE PATIENT ADVOCATE

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# INTRODUCTION

To understand the role of a patient advocate, how to be a good advocate, and how to use an advocate, we must first understand the patient's rights. We will also discuss the advanced directives and the importance of those.



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# PATIENT RIGHTS

- The first and most obvious right is the right to know one's rights and receive an explanation of one's rights
- Right to ask questions and complain
- Right to emergency care and admission, examination and treatment
- Right to know caregivers and refuse treatments
- Right to respect and have special needs addressed
- Right to choose treatment and ethics consultation
- Right to timely response to care needs, to receive quality and compassionate care
- Right to privacy and confidentiality, access to medical records, and all the care information
- **Right to patient advocacy services**
- **Right to execute advance directives**

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## PATIENT ADVOCATE – WHAT IS A PATIENT ADVOCATE?

According to the Joint Commission “Everyone getting medical treatment should have someone to support them, to help raise questions, take notes, enhance communication with medical staff and make sure they are receiving patient-centered care. *This person is called a patient advocate.* An advocate can also help organize support from others, run errands, and generally support patient’s needs throughout their care and treatment.”

Pulse Center for Patient Safety Education & Advocacy <https://pulsecenterforpatientsafety.org/happenings/> is a non-profit community-based organization dedicated to raising awareness about patient safety through advocacy, education, and support.

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## PATIENT ADVOCATE – WHO NEEDS A PATIENT ADVOCATE?

- Everyone who is receiving treatment from the health care system needs an advocate
- If your hospital is Joint Commission accredited, that means the hospital is required to have a complaint resolution process. Most hospitals have Patient Advocates—also known as Patient Representatives—who help patients resolve their concerns.
- Patient Advocates sometimes stop by your room to introduce themselves and check on how your hospital stay is going.
- Family member, friends, caregivers, and anyone you choose can be a patient advocate. You can also learn to become one for others (only about 70% of patients have a designated patient advocate)

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# PATIENT ADVOCATE – WHY WOULD YOU WANT OR NEED ONE?

Why would you want one?

- Safety
- Better care
- Navigating insurance and medications

Who should be an advocate?

- Choose someone who is assertive, organized, caring, calm, discreet, comfortable asking questions
- Your advocate is your educator; good communication (clearly explain the help patient needs, take notes, might have access to electronic health records, has all contact information, etc.)

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# BEING YOUR OWN PATIENT ADVOCATE OR HELPING A LOVED ONE

## Prepare for the doctor visit

- Prepare a list of questions and symptoms before the visit or procedure
- Play active role in your care
- Be honest about symptoms
- Keep detailed list of medications
- Keep medical history records

**Set up the Medical ID app on your smartphone** [Medical ID instructions](#)

## Virtual visit guide

- Make sure you're available
- Remember the appointment
- Ask for the direct contact in case of disconnect
- Have pen and paper ready
- Eliminate/minimize background noise and distractions
- Use level surface
- Use good lighting

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# BEING A PATIENT ADVOCATE

## Tips for advocate when talking to the doctor

- Ask the patient if you may ask questions
- Be sure to repeat back what was said
- It is like a cake recipe
- Encourage the patient to share concerns
- Never say “I need”...”the patient needs”
- Ask the staff to wash their hands if ok with the patient (CDC reports 90,000 people die from hospital-acquired infections each year)
- Ask what time the doctor does the rounds (e.g., surgery)
- Encourage the patient to know 3 questions:
  1. What is my main problem?
  2. What do I need to do?
  3. Why is it important for me to do that?



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# WHAT MAKES YOU A GOOD PATIENT ADVOCATE?

- Communicate with respect
- Navigate the paper trail
- Keep it private
- Gather information – not all EMRs are connected or the same
- Join the crew

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# ADVANCED DIRECTIVES

- Patient advocate is not the same as the healthcare proxy
- Advanced directives is a general name for several kinds of documents signed to ensure the patient's wishes about medical treatment are known and respected when patient is unable to communicate for themselves.
  - It is a legal document that expresses the kind of medical care a patient wants, and who is authorized to make decisions should a patient be unable to communicate their wishes.
  - Examples of healthcare advance directives include:
    - A living will
    - **Health care power of attorney (also, healthcare proxy)**
    - DNR (Do not resuscitate) order
- You can complete your own advanced directives [Advanced Directives Form NYS](#)

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# HEALTHCARE PROXY

- There are three steps in naming a health care proxy:
  1. Picking a person
  2. Having a conversation with that person
  3. Adding that person's information to your official documents
    - Adding the person in the patient portal for easier access
- Why do you need one?
  - Can't predict the future
- When do you need one?
  - Everyone over age 18

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## SUMMARY

### **Anne**

Ilene Corina from PULSE trained the woman who was my advocate when I was diagnosed with breast cancer. A recent widow, I was overwhelmed by the diagnosis and feeling alone and very vulnerable. My advocate accompanied me to my pre-surgical doctor visits and helped me to ask the questions I had discussed with her beforehand. She calmly recorded the various treatment options as they were proposed and was able to discuss them again with me later as I mulled over which treatment path I would take.

### **Stacey**

I was my husband's (Michael) advocate on many occasions, relating to his brain tumor diagnosis in 2007. The doctor insisted on managing the tumor on his own without a neurologist who would be the specialist for this condition. I was persistent in following up because of my knowledge, some of which was acquired through PULSE. The actions taken were: Verifying medication type and dosage and insisted on seeing a specialist for the kind of tumor he has.

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# THANK YOU

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Sample courses:

HSMB 302 Legal and Ethical Issues in Healthcare

HSMB 311 Healthcare Information Technology

HSMB 310 Quality and Patient Safety

