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Navigating the Health Care System
Navigating the Health Care System

A Four Part Series

- The Family Doctor and Beyond...
- Overtaken By Illness...
- No Longer Independent...
- Advocating For Health
Health Advocacy

What’s a Health Advocate? Why Do You Need One?
Tools for Empowering Yourself and Others in Accessing Health Care

- What’s in a title?
- How health advocacy can help you
- Become one or find one – a look at the pros and cons
- Basic how-tos for becoming a health advocate
- The burden of care
Health Advocacy

The Rise of the Health System Navigator – Why?

- Historical perspective
- Complexity of health care system
- Negative effects of unintegrated care
- Lack of knowledge and vulnerability
- Lack of time to take this on personally
- Trying to navigate the system can be frustrating and overwhelming – “like going through a maze”
- Advocacy gets faster care
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What’s In A Title?

- Health System Navigator/Patient Navigator/ Patient Advocate/Health Advocate
- Spokesperson/Supporter/Believer/Sponsor/Promoter/Campaigner/Backer
- Professional Patient Advocates – government/in-hospital/organizations/private navigators
- Volunteer Advocates – family /friends/associates
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How can a Patient Advocate Help?

- Speaking up for patients in need of guidance through the health care system
- Creating a personal health record
- Attending appointments
- Getting information/asking questions
- Writing down pertinent info from your caregivers as well as your questions
- Knowledge translation
How can a Patient Advocate Help?

- Exploring and clarifying your options
- Coordinating services and referrals
- Overcoming barriers to ensure prompt Dx and treatment
- Assuring your wishes are carried out when you can’t
- Dispute resolution
- Visiting clients at home
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Benefits for the Patient

- Better understanding of disease/treatment
- Improved emotional and practical support
- Improved coping
- Improved wait times
- Increased compliance with treatment plan
- Better preparation for medical appointments
- Increased satisfaction with care
- Potentially better treatment outcomes
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Finding a Health Advocate to Work for You

- Niche market or growing trend?
- Publicly funded navigators
- Private navigators - “Buyer Beware”

Websites/referrals/interviews
Qualifications/experience
Wide range of costs/commission
Wide variation in services offered
Short-term or long-term?
Location
Advocacy for Health

What to look for in a Patient Advocate

- Someone you trust
- Willing to act on your/your family’s behalf
- Able to work well with the client and members of their health care team as a liaison
- Good communication skills
- Conflict resolution skills
- Assertive and tenacious
- Health care system experience
- Health professional
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How Tos

- Take courses/attend seminars or workshops on assertiveness training, mediation and conflict management
- Do internet research, read books and articles on advocacy, relevant diseases, conditions, treatments
- Learn about resources
- Expand you general knowledge of the health care system
- Make sure you’re prepared emotionally
- Stay on top of “the case”

OR

- Reach out to a family member, friend or professional advocate
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How to Complain Successfully

- Know your goal
- Define the problem succinctly
- Plan before you act
- Documentation and detail
- Learn the complaints process
- Use an advocate eg. in-hospital patient advocates
- Regulatory bodies/hospital quality committees/appeal boards/political recourse/the media
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The Burden of Care

Maintaining Balance and Preventing Burnout

- Ask for help
- Give yourself a break
- Practice acceptance
- Take care of your health
- Seek support
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Additional Resources

Healthy Debate
Free e-book “The Personal Navigator – a patient’s guide to Ontario’s health care system” and email access to a Patient Navigator

Health Quality Ontario
http://www.hqontario.ca/

CARP
http://www.carp.ca/

Community Care Access Centres (CCACs)
http://www.ccac-ont.ca
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Additional Resources

The Care Guide (including access to Care Connect Helpline)
http://www.thecareguide.com/
Advocacy Centre for the Elderly
http://www.acelaw.ca/index.php
AdvoConnection
http://advoconnection.com/
Regulated Health Professions in Ontario
Ontario Health Services Appeal and Review Board
http://www.hsarbg.on.ca/
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Questions?

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