

## Everyone needs a Patient Advocate

Living in South Florida makes you keenly aware of the senior citizen population. Like many of you, I am at a point in my life where my parents are starting to get older and need major medical attention. There are four siblings in my family and we all contribute on a different level. Recently my father had to have a shoulder replacement and I went up to New York for his surgery.

There is nothing more stressful than sitting in a hospital all day waiting for news about your loved one. I saw the faces of so many families in the waiting room that day, some saying the rosary while others napped waiting for their loved ones name to be called. One thing is for sure, everyone needs an advocate.

There have been many trips to the hospital with my parents in the last few years and I always catch something going wrong. My mother had a knee replacement. The day after surgery they had her in a harness to keep her leg moving. The harness was so big that she had a contusion on her upper leg where it kept hitting her, which led to a sciatica attack and nearly a trip to the ER. When I got there I insisted that they take off the harness but it was on all night and the damage was done. They told me it was doctor's orders and that he couldn't be disturbed on a Sunday. I asked for his number and called myself.

This recent visit to the hospital with my Dad also led to complication, which is something I have grown to anticipate. As your parents get older, it is never just surgery anymore and the release date is always extended. In this case, his shoulder surgery went on so long that it took a toll on his body and he had a difficult time coming back to all his normal functioning self. When they were going to push him out the door a day after with a catheter, I insisted on seeing a Urologist. Again, I was told there was no one on duty on Saturday afternoon. This time I actually overheard the nurse telling the resident on the phone, that Mr. Cross's daughter was here and she was adamant about seeing a urologist and wasn't going to stop until someone came to see him. An hour later a Urologist walked in.

It isn't easy taking on the role of the patient advocate but someone has to do it. In each case, a stay was extended and the problem was treated in the hospital instead of having to return to an ER at midnight the next day. I encourage all of you to look after your loved ones when they are going in for a procedure. I know one day it will be me in the hospital and I only hope someone will be my advocate.

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