



A Medical Workbook

For My Medical, Hospital And Emergency Care

*A lifesaving medical guide for you,
loved ones, family, and friends.*

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A Medical Workbook
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While the authors made every effort to provide accurate information at the time of publication, neither the publisher nor the authors assumes any responsibility for errors, or for changes that may occur after publication.

This handbook is not intended as a substitute for the medical advice of physicians. The reader should regularly consult a physician in matters relating to his/her health and particularly with respect to any symptoms that may require diagnosis or medical attention.

We dedicate this workbook to the many patients whose needs and experiences have helped us to become better clinicians and have inspired us to move forward with this project.

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Introduction

You have an accident, or you are feeling so terrible you decide to go to the emergency room (E.R.). Doctors and nurses ask you for details about your health.

“Tell me the names of your doctors, their phone numbers, and addresses.” “What medications are you taking?” “What surgeries have you had?”

The doctors will want you to accurately tell them as much of your medical information as possible, but patients struggle with this information. Accurate medication lists are very important but frequently these lists are incomplete or outdated or do not exist. When patients have to rely on their memory, they often can only describe the medications. “I take a round green pill and an oval pink one.” This may not be enough information to identify the medications that are being taken. There is so much to remember, and things are moving so fast. The experience is overwhelming.

Today’s patients need to be responsible for their own health, before they have a health crisis. They should educate and organize themselves, so they will be able to explain their current health concerns and health history. Providing an accurate picture of your health and medical information helps the medical team understand your condition better and may help them identify your problem quicker, so you can receive appropriate treatment. It can make a BIG difference!

Patients are often surprised they need to know the details of their health. They ask “Why doesn’t my doctor or the hospital have my medical information?” Doctors, hospitals and medical centers have complex electronic information systems that should be able to access your information. However, these systems are not always able to communicate with each other. This can leave your doctors or hospitals with incomplete or outdated medical information. As a result, YOU are responsible to tell the doctors your medical history.

Patients may also expect to be treated in the hospital by their personal doctor who knows them well. However, today many hospitals use hospitalists. These are doctors who specialize in taking care of patients in the hospital. Hospitalists depend on both the information provided by the electronic medical records system, and the information that YOU, the patient, provide.

Storing your medical information on your cell phone, tablet, or computer sounds like a great idea. Yes, it is convenient, however, we have found problems with only storing your information electronically. Hospitals, emergency rooms and doctors' offices often do not have good cell phone reception and may not have the time or ability to transfer your information into their system. In a crisis, valuable time is lost in transfer of information from a personal electronic device to the hospital system. A paper copy of your medical information is a good backup that can be easily read and scanned.

As a nurse and a pharmacist, we have worked in hospitals, emergency rooms, clinics, and doctors' offices. We have seen how anxious, confused, and ill-prepared patients and their families can be when facing health issues and working through our medical system. As advocates, we have developed methods to help organize a patient's health information and manage their visits to the doctor, the hospital and the emergency room. We created this workbook to provide you with information, advice, and forms needed to help you address different medical situations.

YOUR MEDICAL WORKBOOK IS THE FOUNDATION OF YOUR HEALTH INFORMATION.

Your workbook will be your medical information center. Take it with you to your doctor's appointment, hospitalization, surgery, or procedure. Share it with the nurse and/or doctor. It will provide contact information, accurate facts about your current health condition, health history, medication list, and other important medical information that your doctors need. By taking responsibility and helping providers understand your medical condition and concerns, you are positively impacting your health care!

We have created several forms to organize your information.

- **MY MEDICAL WORKBOOK** (see pages 7-11) should be completed first. It will include your health history, medications, contacts and other important medical information. Remember to update your workbook. This is especially important for changes in your medications and medical conditions.
- **QUESTIONS FOR MY DOCTOR'S APPOINTMENT** form (see page 15) is used for all doctor's appointments. Your doctor is your personal medical expert and has limited time - use it well. When this form is prepared in advance of your appointment, you have the opportunity to think about what you want to say. It will help you to remember what to ask before and after you walk in the door.

- If you are hospitalized, **MY HOSPITAL STAY** form (*see page 29*) has suggestions for what to ask your nurse when you are getting ready to go home. There is also a **"WHAT IF... .."** form (*see page 35*) to help identify worrisome symptoms and the actions you might need to take. It includes a section for follow-up appointments made while you are still in the hospital.
- **MY CARE TEAM AT HOME** form (*see page 38*) lists those people helping you at home and your follow-up appointments. This section is designed to organize medical information so you and your family can understand and manage your care when you are at home.

Good health care requires both a medical plan and a responsible person in place to act for you, if you are too sick to act for yourself. To identify that person, you need to complete an **ADVANCE DIRECTIVE**. If you are frail and/or approaching the end of your life, you should also ask your doctor about filling out a **PHYSICIAN ORDERS FOR LIFE SUSTAINING TREATMENT (POLST)** form. These forms are available from your hospital or on the web.

HOW TO GET STARTED

The first form to fill out is **MY MEDICAL WORKBOOK**. It organizes your basic medical information in one place. Gather the appropriate information and complete your workbook. Review it with your primary care doctor. Your doctor may make changes or add important medical information to improve your workbook. It is important to keep your it up to date as your health changes.

- Use a pencil so you can erase and make changes.
- Keep your medication list and your allergies up to date.
- Erase old medications and add the new ones.
- Add the names of any new medical conditions.
- Add the dates of your old and new procedures and surgeries.
- Keep the names and contact information of your doctors and other medical providers current.

Take charge of your health care future!