



How to Protect Yourself From **Medical Harm**

Participant Workbook

V 2.1.2

Welcome and Introduction

Icebreaker (in Pairs):

What does patient-centered care mean to you?

Why did you come to the event today? What do you hope to leave with?

Additional Notes

Activity 1: The 5 Questions

The Problem:

The Yale School of Medicine asked 89 patients and 43 doctors about patients' hospital experiences. Here is it they found:

PERCENTAGE OF DOCTORS WHO ...		PERCENTAGE OF PATIENTS WHO ...	
Said patients knew the name of the doctor overseeing their care.	67%	Could name the doctor overseeing their care.	18%
Said patients knew their diagnosis.	77%	Knew their diagnosis.	57%
Did not discuss adverse drug effects with patients.	19%	Said they were not told about adverse drug effects.	90%
At least sometimes discussed patients' fears and anxieties.	98%	Had fears and anxieties but didn't discuss them with their physician.	54%

What problems does this data reveal to you?

5 Questions to Ask Your Doctor Before You Get Any Test, Treatment, or Procedure

Before you get any test or treatment, ask your doctor these five questions. Why? Because some medical tests, medications, and procedures might not be right for you. A conversation with your doctor helps you to avoid unnecessary, duplicative, or overly risky care.

1. **Do I really need this test or procedure?** Medical tests help you and your doctor or other health provider decide how to treat a problem. And medical procedures help to treat it.
2. **What are the risks?** Will there be side effects? What are the chances of getting results that aren't accurate? Could that lead to more testing or another procedure?
3. **Are there simpler, safer options?** Sometimes all you need to do is make lifestyle changes, such as eating healthier foods and exercising more.
4. **What happens if I don't do anything?** Ask whether your condition might get worse—or better—if you don't have the test or procedure right away.
5. **How much does it cost?** Ask whether there are less expensive tests, treatments, or procedures, what your insurance may cover, and about generic drugs instead of brand-name drugs.

Do you feel comfortable asking your doctor these questions? Why or why not?

Practicing the 5 Questions

Partner with someone you don't know. Pick one person to be the patient and one person to be the doctor. The patient will practice using the five questions, and the doctor will use the answers below. The person playing the doctor should feel free to embellish on the answers. The person playing the patient should also feel free to ask more questions. The goal is to get you feeling more comfortable with the idea of asking these questions.

Scenario: The patient has been complaining of stomach pains that may be associated with chronic heartburn. In the initial appointment, the doctor is recommending an upper

gastrointestinal endoscopy (a procedure that allows your doctor to look at the inside lining of your esophagus with a camera).

Possible Answers From Your Doctor

- **Typical doctor response to question 1:** I highly recommend it so that we can determine what is going on with your stomach. This will allow us to put a tiny camera in your esophagus to see what may be going on in there.
 - **Alternative response:** Let's look at your lifestyle and see if there are factors that might be contributing to this over the next few months. You could try changing your diet, reducing your stress levels, and taking over-the-counter medications.
- **Typical doctor response to question 2:** It's a minimally invasive outpatient procedure. We will put you under, so you may feel groggy after you come out of the anesthesia.
 - **Alternative response:** There is some risk of infection that we will try to avoid.
- **Typical doctor response to question 3:** If we don't do the test, we couldn't rule out a serious illness like cancer.
 - **Alternative response:** Try making some changes. You could avoid caffeine, alcohol, and foods that may trigger heartburn, such as fried foods, citrus fruits, tomatoes, and spices. Stop smoking if you smoke.
- **Typical doctor response:** Let's look at your lifestyle over the next few months and see if there are factors that might be contributing to this.
 - **Alternative response:** You could try changing your diet, reducing your stress levels, and taking over-the-counter medications.
- **Typical doctor response:** I'm not sure about the cost, but I feel like we need to rule out more serious problems.
 - **Alternative response:** Every insurance is different. If you do decide to go through with this, our administrator can discuss that with you.

Did practicing the questions change anything for you?

Activity 2: Safeguarding Against Infections

Have you or anyone you know contracted an infection in a hospital?

Here are key steps you can take for preventing infections in the hospital, so you can keep yourself and your family safe.

1. **Have a friend or family member with you.** That person can act as your advocate, ask questions, and keep notes. A Consumer Reports survey of 1,200 recently hospitalized people found that those who had a companion were 16 percent more likely to say that they had been treated respectfully by medical personnel.
2. **Insist on clean hands.** Ask everyone who enters your room whether they've washed their hands with soap and water. Alcohol-based hand sanitizer is not enough to destroy certain bacteria, such as the dangerous *Clostridium difficile* (C. diff).
3. **Keep it clean.** Bring bleach wipes for bedrails, doorknobs, the phone, and the TV remote, all of which can harbor bacteria. And if your room looks dirty, ask that it be cleaned.
4. **Postpone surgery if you have an infection.** Surgery increases your risk of developing a new infection and worsening an existing one. So if you have any other type of infection—say, an abscessed tooth—the surgery should be postponed, if possible, until the infection is completely resolved.
5. **Say no to razors.** Removing hair from the surgical site is often necessary, but doing that with a regular razor can cause nicks that provide an opening for bacteria. The nurse should use an electric trimmer instead.

You can find more tips here: bit.ly/preventinginfections

How did you feel about the role-play you just watched?

Write down examples of moments when other participants felt medical providers did not follow proper sanitation protocols. How would you handle this if it happened to you?

Additional Notes

Activity 3: Keeping Track of Your Medications

What medications do you currently take? Can you list them all?

Managing Multiple Drugs

It's recommended that you review all your drugs with your doctor every six to 12 months. The best way to make sure you are taking the right drugs is to review all your drugs with your primary care doctor, but you should also review your drugs with your specialists.

Questions About Each Medication:

1. **Do I still need this drug?** Each of your drugs was prescribed for a specific problem. If you no longer have that problem, ask your doctor about stopping the drug.
2. **Does this drug do the same thing as another drug I take?** This can happen because you got similar drugs from different doctors. Or you may take a brand-name and a generic drug that do the same thing. You might not need both drugs.
3. **Should I still be taking the drug?** Make sure you are not taking a drug longer than you need to. For example, if you take a proton pump inhibitor (PPI), such as Prevacid or Prilosec for heartburn, you can usually stop after six months. There are some drugs, like pain medicines, that you should use only for a short period of time.

4. **Is there anything I can do instead of taking this drug?** There may be drugs that you should not take if you are older. This is because the body processes drugs differently as we age. Or you may be taking a drug that is not safe because the doctor who prescribed it did not know all your health issues.
5. **Does this drug interact with any other drug I am taking?** Drug interactions can cause several problems. One or more of the drugs may be less effective. You may have more side effects. Mixing drugs, vitamins, and herbs can also cause problems. For example, some drugs are less effective if you are also taking iron supplements.

What ideas did other people have for how they track their drugs? Write down the things that you'd like to incorporate into your life.

Conclusion

Final thoughts. What have you learned? What will you take away?

Make a commitment to deploying the five questions you learned in this workshop. For your next doctor's appointment, put the five questions in whatever calendar or reminder you use

Doctor:

Date:

Time:

Additional Notes

Volunteer Interest

Would you be interested in presenting a workshop similar to this one in your community, or to your family and/or friends, if given training and CR staff guidance?

☐ YES ☐ NO

If you answered **YES**, please fill out your contact information below so that someone from CR can follow up with you.

Name	
Phone Number	
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