

“Details, details – help us help you”

Live Healthy and Be Well

Stephen Jarrard, MD FACS

I owe this month’s topic to my former nurse Jamie. She used to notice that patient knowledge of their own healthcare situation runs the gamut from some with a complete lack of knowledge to other patients who have taken complete control of their situation. What we are talking about is how much it helps if you have certain information written down and prepared, kept updated over time, and available in an “easy to read” record format for your healthcare providers. This does not have to be complicated, have too many details, and you do not have to have a copy of every test or study you’ve had in your life – but a basic summary of these facts. If you do this, it would assist in your care, whether it is a new primary care provider on the first office visit, should you need to visit an ER somewhere, have a physical/occupational therapy or chiropractor appointment, or become ill while traveling on a cruise ship or in a foreign country on vacation. If you could provide a single page or two of this vital information – it could save so much time, and possibly your life!

Topics of interest to most providers would include updated contact information, insurance details, any known allergies, past medical history, past surgeries or major procedures, and a very important piece of information is an updated list of your current medications. Contact information should consist of your current name and address, date of birth, and a telephone number where you could be reached if needed. You should also include someone close to you as an emergency contact person in case that should be needed. Insurance details should include the name of the company, your account number and/or group number, and a phone number in case pre-certifications are needed for a surgery or procedure.

It also good to know of any chronic medical conditions you have or for which you may be under treatment, and any major operations or invasive procedures you may have undergone in the past and how long ago. Examples of past medical history would be letting us know you have high blood pressure or diabetes, and whether you might have had a heart attack or stroke. Providers also need to know about your past surgical history such as appendectomy, gallbladder removal, or hysterectomy. Major invasive procedures such as cardiac catheterization and stent placement (and how many) also help us to know about your overall condition and guide us to specific things to be concerned about.

The most important information you may be able to provide is your knowledge about any medicine allergies you may have or environmental allergies such as peanuts or iodine. It is much better to know about reactions you may have had to drugs in the past than to find out the hard way when you are already ill. Also, it often amazes us how many people take prescription medicines and have no idea what they are taking! We hear things like “It’s a little green pill,” or “It starts with an L.” Your provider *owes* you information about medicines they prescribe, and you should always ask and know the name, dosage, and how often you take the medicine. Keep this updated as your prescriptions change, and it will provide valuable information to your

healthcare team. In summary, an example of such information is provided below. Do this for yourself and every member of your family and make sure they have copies available. In these days of computers, it should be easy to make up this list and keep it current from time to time.

Thomas I. Wannabewell (DOB: 01/02/1954)
123 456th Street
Somewhere, GA 12345
(706) 123-4567
In emergency Thomas B. Wannabewell, Jr. (706-425-1234)

Insurance

Blue Sword and Shield Co.
Acct # 56789
Group # 12345
(800) 987-6543

Allergies

Sulfa drugs
Latex
Peanuts

Past Medical History

High blood pressure
COPD
Diabetes type 2
Hypothyroid

Past Surgical History

Appendix '85
Cataract left eye '09
Right total knee '12

Medications

Atenolol 25 mg once a day
Lisinopril 20 mg once a day
Combivent Inhaler two puffs twice a day
Synthroid 88 mcg once a day
Metformin 500 mg take two twice a day
Aspirin 325 mg one a day
Multi-vitamin w/iron one a day
Fish Oil Capsule 1000 mg take two once a day

You could also add the names, office addresses, and office phone (and fax) numbers of any providers you see – such as your primary care doctor and any specialists. Do this and help all of us take better care of you!

We really do enjoy hearing from you with any questions, concerns, or ideas for future columns and/or health and wellness related issues for the *Georgia Mountain Laurel*. Please send an email to rabundoctor@gmail.com, or call us at 706-782-3572, and we will be sure to consider your input. This and previous articles can be now be found on the web at www.rabundoctor.com in an archived format. If you use Twitter, then follow us for health tips and wellness advice @rabundoctor. Until next month, live healthy and be well!