

Medical Advocacy 101

When your loved one is in the hospital and not being cared for properly and/or not being allowed an advocate:

Contact Charge Nurse

Tell the charge nurse: "I am calling to tell you that I am initiating the "Chain of Command" with a deadline of one hour. I'm not happy with _____'s care (if not lucid). He's not lucid and I'm telling you he should not be making his own medical decisions. No one is calling me from the medical team with updates or asking my permission. I feel that he is being medically neglected because you're not doing everything you could be doing to make sure he gets better. I need someone to call me back within an hour to let me know how we're going to rectify this situation.

Next:

- Set an alarm to call the hospital in an hour advising - No one has called. I need to speak to your manager.
- Say: "I need the manager to call me back in 30 minutes or I will come up there and we can do this in person. I respect that you're busy but right now I don't feel that my family member is safe and you're not responding to me.
- Please note that the Chain of Command M-F during the day is different than for evenings/nights and weekends.
 - M-F days: Charge nurse → Unit manager (**NOT** Case manager) → Director (ICU, or whatever department patient is in) → Administrative Office

The Charge nurse handles problems - you need to be a big problem for them! Encourage others to do the same.

Show the hospital you are respecting the way the hospital system works by going through the Chain of Command. That way if you must go all the way to Admin you can **tell** them the steps you have taken:

- I called the Charge Nurse at ___ am/pm. No one called me back.
- I called the Unit manager at ___ am/pm. No one called me back.
- I called the Director at ___ am/pm. No one called me back.
- To Admin: "If you want to have the Unit manager call me we can back up and it doesn't have to escalate and get this out of control."

Usually at this point they will have someone call you back. However, if it goes to admin, you will want to start using words like: Lawyers, Family's team of Lawyers, Private Advocate

Hospitals are supposed to provide a patient advocacy service – these can still be very helpful even if assigned by the hospital because the hospital knows that once this is requested there's a good chance that the hospital will find itself dealing with a legal situation.

You can hire any strong person as a patient advocate – there is no credential for providing this.

If you still are not getting anywhere you need to find a lawyer.

Once you do get to speak with the doctor working with your loved one, if they are not cooperative, you can fire them!

Your goal is to have a family care conference including:

- Nurse
- Charge nurse
- Unit manager
- Social worker (maybe)
- Respiratory therapist (maybe)
- Physician(s) involved – 1 or 2

This conference provides you the opportunity to really effect the patient's care – much more effective than trying to talk to one person at a time.