

Supporting Older Adults in Talking with HealthCare Providers



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Question and Answer

What are some suggestions on addressing a physician who may be “talking down” to the patient with a disability?

This can be challenging but I have found the best way to address is to make contact and continue to include the individual into the discussion. Model for the physician how to communicate and this will hopefully help the physician to change their behavior.

How can you work with a nurse advocate or nurse navigator?

Most large hospitals will have these services available. You can also ask your physician for a referral. You may want to check with your insurance to determine if these services are covered under your plan. A nurse advocate or navigator can help the patient navigate medical processes. You may also ask someone you know personally that have experience in the medical field help you as you attend meetings.

What do you suggest if the physician requires that the direct support professional go into the room during a medical appointment?

All patients have rights under the Patient Bill of Rights including the right to privacy. However, it may be helpful to provide an introduction letter to the physician describing the patient’s communication skills and their ability to share information without support.

What do you suggest if the physician feels that the patient is “too old” for aggressive treatment.

I would recommend that you ask the physician to explain their position further and if the patient/caregiver does not agree, request a second opinion.