

# DO MORE THAN EXPECT THE BEST – DEMAND THE BEST IT'S YOUR CHOICE. MAKE SURE YOU'RE HEARD

"Patient Rights" are slowly edging to the forefront nowadays as hospitals, nursing home facilities, home care agencies, and other medical providers continue to battle over where, how, and by whom patients will receive care. Unfortunately, as this battle rages on, patients' desires often go ignored. Can you relate? Are you one of those who want to scream: "STOP. I WANT TO BE HEARD!?"

"That is exactly what you should do," encourages Shirley Baker, RN, president of Care Corporation, located at 831 South Street in Chardon. "Demand a choice. Demand to be heard – from what hospital you want to be treated at to which home care agency you want after your release from the hospital."

"The desires and expectations of patients, particularly senior citizens, are being ignored by hospitals and other health care providers as they vie for a bigger cut of the market share," says Baker. "It comes down to money, and I think this is criminal. Patients have a right to choose who will be providing their health care and where it will be provided. People have a right – not just to be heard but to get what they ask for."

Of particular concern to Baker is the home health care arena. She explains, "Many hospitals are sending patients home without offering them a choice concerning which agency they would like for their home health care. I have seen this firsthand with former Care Corp patients. They are released from the hospital and, unsuspectingly, assume Care Corp will be providing their home health care again. Care Corp is not notified of the patient's discharge, and the patient is not asked if they have a preference for home care services. Hospitals are simply sending their hospital-based home care nurses to the homes for follow-up care."

Elizabeth Petersen, RN, vice president of Operations at Care Corp, concurs, "It is an unbelievable battle with hospitals. We must keep educating people that they have to fight – sometimes tooth and nail – to get the home care agency of their choice, whether that's Care Corp, Hospice of the Western Reserve, Cleveland Clinic, etc. — even though it is the law."

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Both Baker and Petersen insist that patients need to refer to the home care agency by name, and

then double, even triple check to make sure their desire is followed.

"You simple cannot assume you will get the agency you want," Petersen says, shaking her head in dismay.

Care Corp offers these tips in making sure your voice is heard:

- **Ask "Who is the agency that will be coming to my house?" Make sure it is the one you want.**
- **Ask, "Where does the staff live that will be coming to my home?" "Do they live close in case of an emergency?"**
- **Ask, "When I have a problem, do you offer 24-hour a day care?"**
- **If you were satisfied with the home care you received in the past, make sure you request that agency by name. If you were not satisfied, ask for someone different.**
- **Regardless of age, hospital patients have a right to choose a home care provider.**
- **When requesting a specific agency, be very firm. Make your choice known to your doctor as well as the hospital discharge planner.**

The family owned and operated Care Corporation has been in operation for 21 years, providing a complete menu of home care services to patients within Geauga County.

Throughout this time, Baker has served as a patient advocate and remains so today. "We constantly tell patients they have a choice. But, they have to exercise that right and often must demand it. We see patients go to hospitals, ask for a specific home care agency, and then are surprised when a different agency comes to their door. Other times, patients feel pressured or coerced. Medicare regulations clearly do not allow steering of patients to a specific provider."

How can patients avoid confusion or complications regarding home care services? Jason Baker, vice president of Finance for Care Corp, suggests, "Most people don't think about home care until faced with a serious medical situation. Early research could prove useful. Contact home care agencies now and request information about their services. Decide in advance on your provider rather than in the midst of a traumatic injury or illness."

Care Corp also provides free home assessments, so patients scheduled for major surgery, for example, may call in advance. The agency will send a nurse to the home or conduct a phone consultation to discuss available options and anticipated needs. By planning ahead, patients can go into the hospital with the comfort of knowing what to expect when they return home.

Care Corp's qualified experienced nurses are all local residents of Geauga County. "Personally, I think local home care is better," says Baker. "Nurses coming to Geauga County from

Cleveland or another county can't get here fast enough. If you have a problem, you want your nurse to be at your home in 15 to 20 minutes, not hours."

"Also not everyone understands the culture in Geauga County," adds Petersen. "We have a lot more seniors, more family involvement, and more independence than you do in Cleveland. There is also no public transportation in Geauga County, and many people don't have neighbors to check in on them."

As a full-service home care agency, Care Corp provides skilled nursing, physical, occupational and speech therapies, social work, home health aides, homemaker/companion services, as well as Hospice care. "We also know the doctors, hospitals and social services community in Geauga County," states Baker. "We can get our clients whatever they need, whenever they need it. In addition, our nurses and aides are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, every day of the year. Other agencies will tell you they offer this – but Care Corp actually delivers!"

For more information on Care Corp or to schedule a free home assessment, please call (440) 286-CARE, (440) 338-6628, or (440) 632-5991. [C](#)



Shirley Baker, RN, president/CEO of Care Corporation, has served as an advocate for patient rights for more than 25 years.

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## GETTING PHYSICAL: EXERCISE YOUR BODY

No matter what your age, physical activity and nutrition go hand in hand on our journey toward health improvement. Seniors, in particular, must incorporate exercise into their daily routine to help boost metabolism, increase mental and physical energy, improve their immune system, decrease stress levels, increase lean body mass and burn fat.

Here are a few useful guidelines to keep in mind as you develop your own "ACTION PLAN" for exercise:

- Look for fun forms of exercise! Gardening, walking and dancing are all great forms of physical activity that are enjoyable through most of the year. The more you enjoy your exercise, the more active you will become!
- Aim for aerobic exercise (walking, swimming, aerobic classes, biking) three to five days a week. Strength train two to three times a week for optimum benefits.

- Start off small! Gradually build yourself up to your goal times by adding five minutes each time you exercise or each week.
- Remember that all physical activity is beneficial! Try getting off the elevator one or two flights before your floor, or walking up or down stairs instead of using the escalator.
- Don't forget to stretch, warm-up and cool-down for at least five to 10 minutes before and after you exercise.
- Incorporate exercise into your daily life. Do leg stretches as you watch television, lift small weights while talking on the telephone, and practice leg lifts while you are waiting for your morning coffee.
- Enlist your family, friends or neighbors to an after-dinner walk around your neighborhood. Enjoy the movement, weather and good conversation.

Always remember, though, to consult your physician before starting any exercise program. [C](#)

\* Tips from [spineuniverse.com](http://spineuniverse.com)