

# *Aging Wisely*<sup>™</sup>

Comprehensive Care Management and Consultation

## ***Help! I Cannot Get Answers about My Loved One's Care***

Does your loved one have difficulty understanding what various medical providers are explaining, or difficulty following through?

Do you get vague answers when you ask your parent about what happened at an appointment or what is being recommended?

Do you try to call doctors or hospitals as your parent's healthcare surrogate and face resistance or play endless phone tag?

It can be very frustrating trying to help an elderly or sick loved one, navigating through the system of care providers. Families often express frustration, especially when trying to coordinate from a distance. Due to privacy laws, medical providers must be very cautious about giving out patient information, and this is meant to protect us all. However, if your loved one wants you to be given information, ask them to talk to their provider about providing that permission in writing. The provider should be able to tell you what they need, whether it is a special form or letter.

If you are appointed as healthcare surrogate (AKA medical power of attorney) for someone, make sure you understand this document and when it goes into effect. In Florida, two doctors must certify that the individual can no longer make their own medical decisions in order for this document to be in force. However, this does not mean a person cannot ask a doctor or provider to share information when this is not the case (see above). If you are acting as healthcare surrogate, make sure providers have copies of the document and the doctor's opinions are noted in the patient's medical chart. Keep copies of this document, as well as any other important documents such as living will, and medical history, with you or somewhere it can be easily accessed. In Florida, there is a proxy statute (FL Statute 765.401) which designates who can make medical decisions when a person is unable and has not completed a document designating their choice. Contact your attorney with questions.

Consider the value of a caregiver portal or electronic personal medical record. Such sites offer secure access to vital information, making it easy to quickly provide documents such as a living will or healthcare power of attorney, or your parent's list of medications and diagnoses. Aging Wisely uses a system called Caregiver's Touch to help clients and families organize and access information and improve care continuity.

Coordinating care can be challenging, especially when managing complex conditions and multiple providers. Know your rights, get to know providers and contacts (such as the office manager at the doctor's office, the case manager covering Mom at the hospital), and call upon professionals such as our *Geriatric Care Managers* who deal with the system regularly and can be invaluable in this role.

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