

It's your Health Take Control

When it comes to health care, we don't want to think about that fact that it is a business. We want to think of our friendly-faced pediatrician who provided us with comfort, solutions to our ailments and made us feel better when we were young.

Unfortunately, between the insurance companies and the pharmaceutical companies hounding doctors for their business and accountants and facility administrators pushing them to boost their numbers, these days there is a lot more to being a doctor than just delivering quality care and a pleasant bed-side manner.

If you, or someone you care about, is sick, hurt, or needs a surgery, you are definitely going to want the best care possible. But will you get it? The answer is, maybe.

We expect that our doctors will always direct us to the best care available and in most cases they are extremely caring people. They wouldn't be in the business for long if they weren't. The reality is that most doctors are overworked, very busy and believe it or not, underpaid for the level of expertise they provide. Your primary care physician may not have the time or forethought to go over all your options with you in detail. This is why, ultimately we all need to be responsible for our own health care.

The main thing to know is that you do have options when it comes to your health care. The challenge for most people is that they don't know what their health care options are or even where to begin looking.

Most physicians will give you an honest answer if you ask directly. There are also services available to those who have a need to find a physician, or specialist, such as the free physician referral service offered by Fullerton Physical Therapy. Consumers can call to receive a recommendation for a physician who specializes in their specific medical issue. They can be reached at 714-871-0460.

It is also important to understand the different types of care available to you. Most people have no idea what questions to ask when it comes to their medical care. For example, do you know the difference between Ambulatory Surgery Centers and hospitals? Or board certified and non-board certified doctors? If you don't, you need to learn. Cheryl Scott of Fullerton Orthopaedic tells us, "If you knew the difference between board certified and non-board certified you would always insist that your physician was board certified."

Keep in mind that although the general public doesn't know much about health care those in the medical industry do. A good way to approach it is to be an investigator. Start with your primary care physician and ask them what they would do and where they would go if they had the same medical issue that you are dealing with.

Then start calling different facilities and, in every case, tell them your situation and ask them if they can provide that service, why they are a better option and if they accept your insurance. If they don't provide the service you need ask them where they would recommend that you go. Those in the medical industry know that there is a huge difference between hospitals, surgery centers, medical offices and doctors.

Don't be afraid to ask, ask, and ask again. After a few phone calls you will begin to get very good at being a medical researcher. When it comes to your health it is important to take the time and effort to know all your options. Approach this task as if your life depends on it, because it just might.

01/17/06