

PART II YOUR CARE IN A CAPSULE

Keep updated medical records

IT'S A sad fact of life that most people devote more time and energy on organizing their bank statements, than they do on their medical records. They simply club together their prescription, chemists' bills, lab reports and doctors' findings, leading to an unwieldy and disorganized pile of papers from which it is difficult for them (and their doctor!) to retrieve any useful information. Maintaining a personal health record at home (for each member of the family) is one of the best ways of ensuring that you will have update information about your health at all times. File all your papers in reverse chronological order: the oldest ones last, and the newest ones first. It is a good idea to number the documents, to make sure they are all in order. If your life becomes very thick (as it may if you have a chronic illness). It is a good idea to summaries your medical history on a single sheet of paper, and to update it on a regular basis, as needed. Your medical record must also contain information about allergies, medications, previous adverse reactions to drugs and details of any treatment you are taking. You can also save your medical records online at website and this has the benefit that these are instantly available anywhere in the world in case of emergency.

Take out medical insurance

Medical care can be expensive and you need medical insurance to protect yourself financially. While no one wants fall ill, the last thing you want to worry about is whether you will be able to afford good medical care. In India, the insurance business is still a monopoly, so that, for all practical purposes, the only medical policy available for most of us is Mediclaim. With increasing liberalization, as the insurance business in India is opened up to the private sector, may more options will become available for patients to choose from.

Stock your medicine cabinet

SINCE more than 80% of illnesses are minor and self-limiting, and can be easily managed at home, your medicine cabinet can serve as a very valuable resource center. It's also good idea to stock simple FIRST AID supplies (such as band aids, bandages, and plasters): and to keep list of important telephone numbers (e.g., your doctor's clinic, nearest 24-hour chemist, ambulance, emergency room) in the medical cabinet.

Prepare a living will

EVEN though no one likes thinking about death, all of us hope that when someone in the family dies, their death will be a good death with dignity. It is

important for everyone to express their preferences regarding the degree and type of medical care they wish to receive at terminal stage of their life. Such preferences can be expressed through formal legal documents called advance directives, which record your wish to choose or refuse certain forms of medical treatment, and are of two types durable power of attorney for health care, and a living will. A living will is a legal document that spells out, in writing, the medical treatment you would want or not want. A living will apply only when you can't express your wishes, and you suffer from a terminal illness.

Learn how to do your homework

EVERY patient needs to become an expert on their medical problem. Your health is important to leave up to anyone else. If you are unfamiliar with a particular topic, a medical encyclopedia is probably the best choice for garnering information. Every home library must have a medical reference book. The Internet is the ultimate information resource it's like a library which is open 24 hours and provides a wealth of information on any and all health and medical topics learn to use wisely.

Learn CPR

CPR or Cardio Pulmonary Resuscitation is a basic skill everyone should learn. To save a life emergency you need to learn the ABCs of CPR and you should contact your nearest hospital or Ambulance society to find out if they offer this course.

NOTE: You can learn at our ambulance Head Quarters. Contact commandant of the Jamsetji Tata Ambulance College. Visit our website for further details.

Find a good doctor

CHOOSING a good primary care doctor is perhaps the most important step you can take to ensure that you get good medical care. A primary care doctor is someone who will provide medical care for your whole family; carry out regular check-ups; and treat common illnesses. Such a doctor is usually a general practitioner (also known as family physician, whose "specialty" is comprehensive care of a patient. Best time to find a doctor is when you don't need one! This statement may seem paradoxical, but finding the right doctor when you fall ill becomes much more difficult, because of the stress of the illness, as well as the pressure of time. You may need to shop around to find Dr. Right and the best way to do this is to ask friends, make a short list, and then interview all of them to find the one who is best for you.

--Courtesy Sunday Review December 2000

DONATION APPEAL

The Bombay city ambulance Corps a society and a charitable trust provides free ambulance services and ambulance education. Except for the ambulance staff and a menial staff everybody renders honorary services to the society. The maintenance of the society mainly depends on voluntary donations.

We therefore appeal well-wishers for generous donations. Donations to the society are exempted from payment of Income Tax u/s 80G.

Donations may be paid by Crossed order Cheque in the name of : "THE BOMBAY CITY AMBULANCE CORPS".

THANKS

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The Bombay City Ambulance Corps, at Head Quarters, 21 New Marine Lines, Mumbai - 400 020
and printed by him for the owners of the Publication "The Bombay City Ambulance Corps."

BOOK-POST

To,



From :
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21 New Marine Lines, Mumbai - 400 020.
Telephone No. : 2201 42 95