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| A picture containing bathtub  Description automatically generated  **DEFRANCO MEDIATION**  What makes life difficult is that the process of confronting and solving problems is a painful one...It is through the pain of confronting and resolving problems that we learn. M. Scott Peck, *The Road Less Traveled* |
| April 2020  **Managing Your Health: A Patient’s Perspective**  Lorenzo De Franco  At any stage of one’s life, the management of one’s health should not be the sole responsibility of your family doctor, dentist, psychologist or other medical professional and staff (doctor). You, the patient, must be an active participant in that managing. The suggestions below, from my personal experiences, are meant to assist you in enhancing the relationship with your doctor to benefit your health.  **Medications/Supplements list:** Keep a list of your medications/supplements (paper or electronic): those you are currently using, those discontinued, operations or serious illnesses you may have had, any testing (e.g. MRI, CT scan, blood test). Below is a sample list that has been useful for me.  **MEDICATIONS/SUPPLEMENTS**  Name\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Address\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Phone Number\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_   |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | | **Name of Medication/Supplements** | **Date Started** | **Dosage** | **Frequency** | |  |  |  |  | |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | **Date** | **Operations/Illnesses/Emergency Visits** | |  |  | |  |  |   Some of the benefits of this list:   * + You do not have to remember the medications/supplements, operations, or illnesses;   + The list saves time because medical staff does not have to write anything down (they can keep or scan a copy of the list) and there is no chance of errors by medical staff;   + The list becomes part of your medical record and history;   + Medical staff appreciate the fact that you demonstrate seriousness about your health. This increases the trust relationship As one doctor said “I have never seen a patient do this. Sometimes patients forget the medications they took the night before. Thank you”.   **Medical tests:** Request and keep copies of your medical tests (blood, CT scans, X-ray reports, MRIs, reports from specialists, etc.). Take the time to review these reports and, if you are unfamiliar with the medical terms, research those terms, ask questions at your next doctor’s visit. One of the most reliable sources I regularly consult is the Mayo Clinic <http://www.mayoclinic.com> which has detailed information on healthy lifestyle, medications and supplements, diseases, symptoms, and tests.  If your doctor requests that you undergo a test, ask for the name, address, and phone number of the testing facility. After a week, check with that facility to ascertain if it has received the request. I have had situations where the facility has not received the request, or it has no record of it. In such a case, have your doctor re-send the request and follow-up again. After your test, it is a good idea not to wait for the doctor to call you. Check with your doctor’s office if the results have been received and, if so, make an appointment to review the results with your doctor.  **Blood pressure:** If high blood pressure is a condition and you are on medications for it, take your blood pressure readings at home and keep a log of them. A blood pressure reading in your doctor’s office is not a true indication due to the stress of being there, the “white coat syndrome”. When you visit your doctor, bring a copy of your home readings so that you doctor has a better indication of how your readings under normal circumstances.  **A pharmacist** is a tremendous resource about medications: side effects, interactions with other medications/supplements, time of day to take them, whether to take them on an empty stomach or with food etc. A pharmacist can schedule a consultation with you to go over all of your medications. There is no cost, the consultation is covered by the Ontario provincial government.  **Doctor appointment**: Prepare. Prepare. Prepare for the appointment. Keep a notebook. Write down what has been happening to you since your last doctor’s visit. Invariably, if I do not do this, I may forget something of importance that could have had an impact on the doctor’s diagnosis. Write a list of questions before your doctor’s visit including any concerns you may. This is equally important in these times of Covid-19 when you may have a telephone consultation with your doctor. Take the notebook with you. Make notes during your doctor’s visit.  If you are faced with a serious medical condition or the possibility of an operation, take the time to consider all of the risks, ramifications and benefits. If necessary, request a second opinion. I have asked for a second opinion on a few occasions in order to have the peace of mind and comfort about the original diagnosis I received. It is your body, your health and your life.  Finally, I want to share a 12-minute TED Talk given by a neurosurgeon, Christer Mjåset. He explains the importance of four questions one should ask a doctor following a diagnosis or suggested treatment. The objective of the questions is not to doubt the doctor’s opinion; rather, it is for the patient to work together with the doctor to have the best care possible. The four questions are:   1. Is this really necessary? 2. What are the risks? 3. Are there other options? 4. What happens if I don't do anything?   Dr. Mjåset’s TED Talk: [Christer Mjåset: 4 questions you should always ask your doctor](https://www.ted.com/talks/christer_mjaset_4_questions_you_should_always_ask_your_doctor/footnotes)    If you have any questions or comments, please call and we can have a chat. |
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