

## How to use our Guide

The Empowered Patient ® Guide contains detailed, but condensed information for patients and their advocates. The chapters correspond to the order in which a patient is likely to encounter each individual topic. The guide begins with *Legalities, Forms and Signatures* because this is the logical starting point for any empowered patient. Stating your wishes about your medical care in writing, choosing an advocate and a health care proxy and signing documents to make your intentions legal is a vital pre-requisite to taking charge of your health care.

The guide continues with basic information on medical records and the members of your healthcare team. Most patients don't realize that their medical record is a tool for both patients and providers to help manage a treatment plan and to communicate effectively. *Your Healthcare Team* explains the hierarchy, or order of authority, of the providers you may encounter and gives patients the vital facts about the experience and training level of their team.

*Meaningful Informed Consent* provides an unprecedented level of information about the process of obtaining a patient's consent and signing consent forms. Patients will encounter consent forms as soon as they are admitted and will likely be expected to sign a form every time an invasive procedure is performed. *The Diagnostic Process* discusses the crucial components of obtaining an accurate diagnosis, including patient research, tests and second opinions. *Surgery and Anesthesia* is designed to be used from the moment a patient is told they need surgery, through anesthesia and recovery. *Infection Control and Prevention* details the many areas that patients and their advocates can have a positive impact on reducing the risk of hospital infections and *Medical Error Reduction* also engages patients as safety partners. *Discharge and Home Care* provides guidance for a safe and successful transition from the hospital to home care. The next two chapters advise patients how to voice their concerns and complaints to the correct person or group, both in the hospital and after discharge.

*The Patient Journal* follows the chapters and is meant to be used as an interactive hospital diary. The forms have been customized to meet the unique needs of patients and their advocates and will allow them to understand the many different aspects of their care and to stay focused and organized. *The Patient Journal* and *The Deteriorating Patient* are integral parts of this guide and are intentionally placed after the chapters to give the reader a foundation for their journal entries and patient observations. We recommend that patients print these sections and place them in a three-ring binder for easy use while you are in the hospital.

*The Deteriorating Patient* section will assist patients and especially their advocates in recognizing the early and often subtle signs of a decline in the patient's condition. The information presented is general and basic, and patients or advocates are not expected to be able to make a medical diagnosis. It is important for those at the bedside to be able to validate their important observations with basic facts about easily recognizable symptoms.

**This guide was written to educate and inform readers about the specific information and skills they need to be active participants in their medical care. It is informational in nature and is not intended as a substitute for the professional advice of a physician, attorney or other advisor.**

