

GETTING THE MOST OUT OF YOUR DOCTOR #5

by Ann Gerhardt, MD
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In the last DrG'sMediSense I wrote about rude medical office staff. In this issue I write about an aspect of rude patient behavior. It may seem minor, but doctors are human too, and behavior like this may affect how much a doctor wants to bend over backwards to help you when more important issues arise.

Scenario 1: Mrs. Jones' insurance suggests that she can fill her 10 prescriptions at a mail-order pharmacy. By receiving three months' of drugs per prescription, she doesn't have to go to the pharmacy every month. This will save her time, and the lower co-pays save her money. She calls the doctor's office and asks that the doctor write all new prescriptions to be sent to her.

The doctor has the chart pulled to obtain the list of drugs, spends 10 minutes getting writer's cramp writing all new prescriptions and hands them to staff, who take time to look up her address for the envelope. The doctor gets home that much later for dinner. (Usually doctors accomplish these types of paperwork tasks after patient hours.) If asked in person in the middle of the day, the process cuts into the next scheduled patient's time, and takes the doctor's time, so the patient can save time and money.

She repeats the whole request 9 months later, when she gets fed up with the mail-away pharmacy because they don't send her prescriptions on time, and she switches back to a local pharmacy. Doctor rewrites her prescriptions 4 days later, a passive-aggressive delay expressing resentment for her inconsideration. When she starts Medicare Part D and is switched to a different plan using a different pharmacy...

Scenario 2: Mr. Smith decides to try getting his 10 prescriptions from a Canadian pharmacy. He sends a request to the doctor, with a written list of his medications, taken from the bottle labels, with name, dose, instructions and calculated number for a three-month supply. (Like this: Allegra, 60mg, one twice a day, #180.) He encloses a self-addressed, stamped envelope. He thanks the doctor and encloses a small token of \$10 for the doctor's time, knowing that this service can't be billed to insurance.

Doctor writes the prescriptions and they get sent off, quickly, since the process takes minimal time and the doctor happily accommodates someone who is clearly considerate of her time and effort.

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Written by Ann Gerhardt, MD

End of scenarios. You get the idea.