

YOU

THE SMART PATIENT

An Insider's Handbook for Getting the Best Treatment

The following insider tips are just a taste of those we crammed into *YOU: The Smart Patient*. We hope that this book will inspire and empower YOU to get involved in your own health care.

We wish you good health and happy reading.

By Dr. Mike Roizen and Dr. Mehmet Oz, with Joint Commission Resources

Just the Facts, Ma'am

Most patients don't do a great job of communicating with their doctors because patients often give us docs too little pertinent information to go on (remember, just like a detective, we're looking for the facts). At the same time, they may also give us too many distracting or off-topic details. The first sign of a Smart Patient is that telltale document they produce during their first visit, or even their 50th. It's their health profile. This is the sign of a patient who means business, one who will challenge us to be at our absolute best and who won't waste time and money on redundant and unnecessary efforts. To create the perfect health profile, circa early 21st century, find the sample form in the book labeled Your Health Journal. These forms are also online at www.jcrinc.com and www.RealAge.com.

Have a Tattle Plan

Bring your spouse to your doctor's appointment when you're giving your health history; there are a lot of questions that only he or she can answer (how many times an hour do you stop breathing while asleep?). But please, before coming in to the office together, make sure you discuss which fibs you're going to tell the doctor. Why?

Because when you tell us that you rarely tear into the Pringles after 8:00 P.M. or that you've been taking your cholesterol-lowering drugs with the discipline of a Marine, your spouse will shoot you--or us--an involuntary look that communicates something close to Are you kidding me? We never miss it.

Finding Dr. Right

One of the most important decisions you will ever make--and one you'll likely make more than once--is choosing your doctor. Choose wisely and you could rest easy for many years to come.

Checklist: We Ask, You Answer

For any condition or ailment you include on your list that you're still dealing with, write down and be prepared to tell the doc the following:

- What caused this?
- When was it diagnosed?
- How are you treating it?
- Has it gotten better or worse?
- When did it first begin to noticeably improve or worsen?
- What makes it better?
- What makes it worse?

To Find a Great Doctor, Ask an ER Nurse

Grill the ER nurse-manager at the best local hospital. A nurse in the intensive-care unit is also a good choice. These registered nurses get a battlefield view of doctors at their best and worst.

Go Board--Certified

The American Board of Medical Specialties recognizes 24 areas of medical specialty including anesthesiology, cardiology, internal medicine, and pediatrics. You can search for board-certified physicians at www.abms.org, or find out if a doctor is board certified online or by calling 866-275-2267.

Meet Your Match

The Internet is the fastest, easiest, modern medium for finding the needle-in-a-haystack doctor who's a perfect match for you. These sites are good choices, though some cater to certain specialties. Finding a particular doctor listed on two or more sites is a good sign.

American Medical Association (AMA)

www.ama-assn.org

American Board of Medical Specialties

www.abms.org

American College of Physicians

www.acponline.org

American College of Surgeons

www.facs.org

Family Doctor (American Association of Family Physicians)

www.familydoctor.org

Healthfinder

www.healthfinder.gov

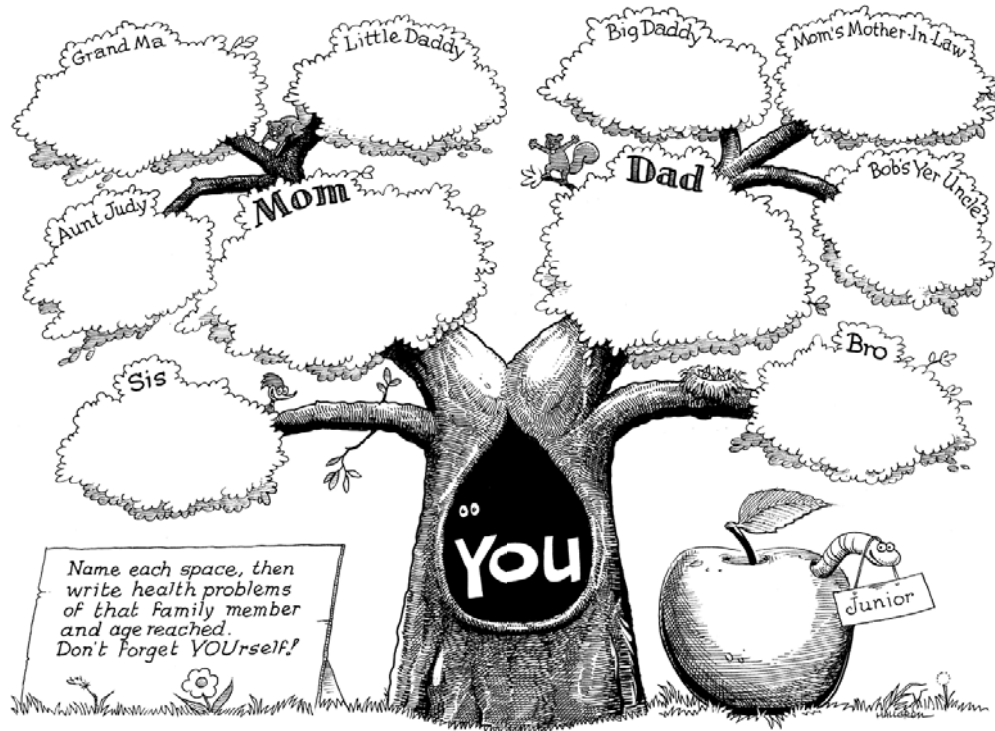
Medline Plus

www.medlineplus.gov

Case Your Hospital

To find the best hospital for you--whether it's a small community hospital, a hospital in your rural area, or a large teaching hospital--go for an accredited hospital listed on the Joint Commission's Quality Check Web site at www.jcaho.org. Joint Commission accreditation is the Gold Seal of Approval for a hospital--and that's what you want.

The Joint Commission also evaluates ambulatory clinics, home health agencies, home medical equipment companies, nursing homes, laboratories, behavioral health care facilities, and more. So check out the Joint Commission's Quality Check before you check into any health-care facility.



The Smart Patient Family Tree

Know Your Hospital's Numbers (and we're not talking phone numbers)

Practice makes perfect. Research has shown that for several common operations, hospitals that perform a specific number or more of that operation every year have better success rates. Your surgeon should be able to give you this info, as should the hospital's information line.

Have the Surgeon Draw a Picture

Surgery performed on the wrong limb? Or wrong person? Absurd! Unbelievable! Except it really does happen. You know that. You see it in the news more frequently than anyone would like. The Joint Commission requires the surgeon to literally mark the site of your surgery (for example, left elbow, right side of abdomen, wherever appropriate) before the operation. And the docs and nurses will triple-check your identity to make sure that you're the right patient before they even lift a scalpel.

Make a New Friend

Your pharmacist is the least expensive and most accessible health resource you have. Why do so few people take advantage of this golden resource? It baffles us. Smart Patients develop a personal relationship with a pharmacist, which makes it easier to ask questions.

Inquire About Technology

Ask if your pharmacy uses the latest safety cross-checking software and medication-monitoring technology.

Go Digital

Some pharmacies allow doctors to write prescriptions electronically. Your doctor can punch in your prescription and it'll be waiting for you at the pharmacy. This eliminates errors from misreading handwritten prescriptions, and renewals are a snap. Ask your pharmacist if she has this capability, then ask your doctor to use it.

What's the Buzz About Grapefruit Juice?

"Don't mix this drug with grapefruit juice!" This strange warning has been circulating in recent years. It's due to a nerdy biochemical thing. To digest grapefruit, you use the same enzymes in your lower intestines that you use to metabolize many drugs. This means more of the drug will reach your bloodstream, which can increase its effect and chances of being toxic.

Insist on Being Scanned

In the hospital, have staff check your hospital ID bracelet before they give you any medication, take blood, or wheel you off for a test. If your hospital uses bar-code scanners on ID bracelets, insist they scan you every time.

Get Thee to a Hospital

How are you feeling? Fine? Never better? You need to find a hospital. The perfect time to scout for the best hospital is when you don't need one. Most people don't give it a thought until a paramedic is looking them in the eye and asking, "Do you have a preference of which hospital you want to go to?"

Racing Hearts

Do you know how fast your ER treats heart cases? What is their average time for getting heart attack patients into surgery? Hospitals are required to document their times. This info is also available on the Joint Commission's Web site at www.qualitycheck.org.

Is Your ER on the Level?

We bet you didn't know all ERs have a level number. Level 1 ERs are tops; they have specialists and high technology at the ready and are equipped to handle anything, most notably, trauma. You'll be lucky if you live near (or have your accident near) one. ERs that rate a level 2 or 3 have a narrower repertoire and fewer specialists.

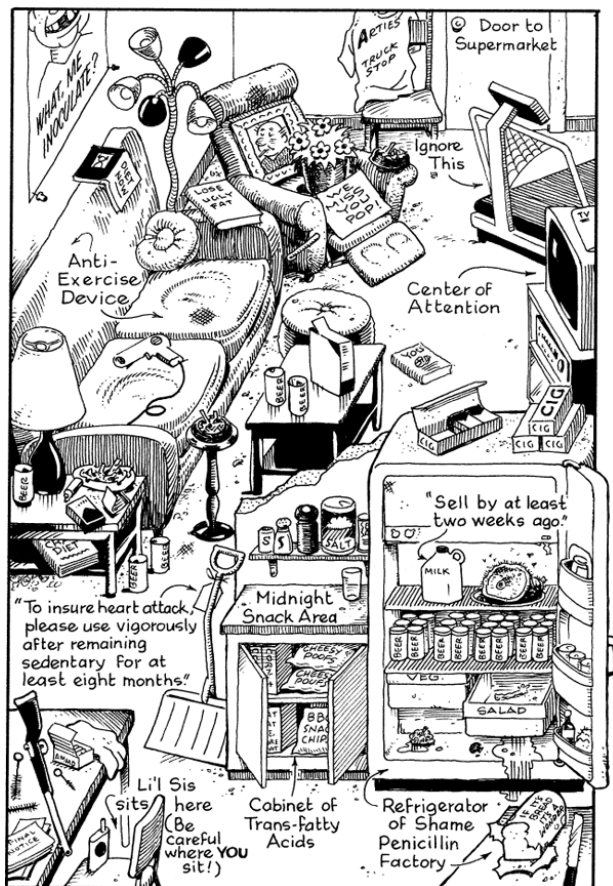
Declare Germ Warfare

The biggest enemy you have in the hospital isn't your phone-addicted roommate. It's much smaller. And there are billions of them. They have names like B. staphylococcus (or staph), Klebsiella, and enterobacter. One may have even visited you before; his name is E. coli. He's responsible for half of the all hospital infections.

Mom Was Right: Wash Your Hands!

When you're in the hospital, absolutely insist that everyone who comes in contact with you washes their hands first, and make sure you wash your own hands several times a day. You might even post a sign that reads "Thank You for Washing Your Hands" as a gentle reminder.

Home, Hazardous Home



You Don't Bring Me Flowers

To reduce the odds of getting a hospital infection, your first gift should be an industrial-sized jug of alcohol hand-sanitizing gel. Keep it by your bed and ask all visitors who might conceivably touch you to squirt some on.

Insist on a Clean Stethoscope

Stethoscopes are filthy from being used on several patients an hour. Most docs now wash their stethoscopes with alcohol between patients, but we'd always ask. To keep things light, try some humor. Say, "I'm taking a survey; did you wash that stethoscope with alcohol or soap and water?"

Don't Touch That Remote!

Or wear rubber gloves if you want to click through the daytime soaps. A study found that the TV remote control is one of the most germ-infested things in a hospital room.

Never Think Twice About Getting a Second Opinion

No smart detective would hang his whole investigation on a single witness's story without making sure it checked out. And no Smart Patient would hang her whole life on a single expert's judgment. Research has found that

getting a second opinion results in a new diagnosis in as many as 30% of all cases, but shockingly, only 20% of patients get a second opinion.

When a Smart Patient consults a doctor for a second opinion, she gives it the Joe Friday treatment: she hands over the test results, gives the facts of her case, and lets us ask the questions. She does NOT say, "My doctor said I have this, but I have my doubts." She doesn't bias the specialist in any way.

Some Tips About Web Research

Smart Patients bone up on all of the latest research about their condition. Most find their health information on the Internet, because the resources and access available on the Web are, to put it mildly, staggeringly awesome. But be careful, because you can't count on all of the info to be reliable. Here are some of the best health-research Web sites:

Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality

www.ahrq.gov/consumer

This Web site, although aimed primarily at health-care professionals, has some health information for consumers as well.

American Medical Association

www.ama-assn.org

The American Medical Association's Web site includes stories about medical issues and news and lets you search for doctors by name or medical specialty.

CDC Health Topics A to Z

www.cdc.gov/ncidod/diseases

This section of the Centers for Disease Control site includes information about infectious diseases, which the CDC studies.

Center for Drug Evaluation and Research

www.fda.gov/cder/drug

This site, part of the FDA's Center for Drug Evaluation and Research, includes information about prescription and over-the-counter drugs, drug safety, and links to major drug-information pages.

National Library of Medicine (NLM)

www.nlm.nih.gov

You'll find links to sites, resources, and databases that you can use to research health conditions and diseases.

National Women's Health Information Center

www.4women.gov

The site includes health information specifically for women. It also focuses on minority health, and has dozens of articles in Spanish.

Just What Gives You the Right?

When you're admitted to the hospital, you're given an armload of forms explaining your rights, but are you in the right state of mind to read them? That's just one of the reasons you need a health-care advocate--a trusted family member or friend--who will help you navigate the health-care system and ask Smart Patient questions. Ask your health-care advocate to dig through all the forms on your behalf.

What, Exactly, Is a Do-Not-Resuscitate (DNR) Order?

Simply, this means that if your heart stops or you stop breathing, the medical staff won't try to revive you. You have to specifically ask for a DNR and put it in writing. We include a sample form in the book and online at www.jcinc.com and www.RealAge.com. If you don't specifically ask for a DNR, you'll get the default "RLC" order (Resuscitate Like Crazy).



A Word of Advice on Alternative Medicine

Although a large number of complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) professionals have their patients' best interests in mind, shams abound. Some are dangerous. You can't bumble your way through the world of alternative medicine as if you were Inspector Clouseau and expect to stay out of harm's way. Make sure that your CAM practitioner is open to conventional medicine and will work with your doctor's therapy (and doesn't insist on being the alternative to your doctor's therapy).

The ABCs on Vitamins and Minerals

You might be surprised to know that, except for a few basic vitamins (C, D, E, B5, B6, B12, folate, niacin, and A) and a few minerals (calcium, magnesium, selenium, potassium, and iron), we have limited scientific information about most supplements on the market. The bottom line? If a supplement works for you, then it works.

Look for the "USP"

Nutritional supplements are classified as food products, so the FDA does not regulate them. Manufacturers can sell them in any quantity or combination they want, with little quality control. The pills might not even contain the substance claimed. Always look for a small "USP" on the label. This means that the United States Pharmacopeia, a reliable nonprofit science organization, has tested and verified the supplement. Check out the U.S. Pharmacopeia's Web site at www.usp.org to get more details.

What's the Real Deal on Echinacea?

Come cold and flu season, we see hordes of patients taking the herbal powder echinacea to ward off a budding bug. Unfortunately, the very few studies on echinacea in Germany and the United States have produced mixed results. And a few even hinted at negative affects. You might be better off putting your money toward a piping hot bowl of chicken soup--which has been proved beneficial by scientific research and Grandma.

How Healthy Is Your Health Insurance?

Many of us have few options in picking health insurance because we're tied to the plan from our jobs. But when you are lucky enough to have choices, here are some important questions to ask.

- How does the insurer rate with the National Committee on Quality Assurance? Check its Web site at www.ncqa.org. Also, the National Association of Insurance Commissioners (NAIC) Web site (www.naic.org) lets you check out individual companies.
- Which hospitals and doctors are in the plan's network? Are the hospitals Joint Commission--accredited? If your doctor isn't in the network, ask your company's HR department to twist the insurer's arm to add him.
- What will happen if I get cancer, get pregnant, or become disabled? These are the biggies that really test insurance.

- What's the maximum lifetime benefit? It should be at least \$5 million.
- At what age will my children be cut off from the plan? (Use this tidbit to get their bottoms out of the house!)



Dr. Mike Roizen and Dr. Mehmet Oz

About the Authors

Michael F. Roizen, MD, is a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Williams College, and an Alpha Omega Alpha graduate of the University of California, San Francisco, medical school. He performed his residency in internal medicine at Harvard's Beth Israel Hospital and completed a tour of duty in the Public Health Service at the National Institutes of Health in the laboratory of Irv Kopin and Nobel Prize winner Julius Axelrod. He practices and is certified by both the American Board of Internal Medicine and the American Board of Anesthesiology. He is 60 calendar years of age, but lives his RealAge paradigm and has a RealAge of 42.1. Calculate your RealAge for free at www.RealAge.com.

Dr. Roizen is past chair of a Food and Drug Administration advisory committee, has been an editor or associate editor for six medical journals, has published more than 155 peer-reviewed scientific papers, 100 textbook chapters, 30 editorials, and 4 medical books (one a medical best-seller, translated into 13 languages), and been issued 12 U.S. and many foreign patents.

Dr. Roizen is the founder of RealAge, Inc., a San Diego-based company, which includes an interactive Web site located at www.RealAge.com. The site addresses health and wellness issues, and the RealAge "Tip of the Day" is subscribed to by over 4.2 million people in North America. Dr. Roizen also developed a program in partnership medicine, first launched at Northwestern Memorial Hospital, aimed at helping its members be Smart Patients and reverse biologic aging and live longer, more vibrant lives.

Anesthesiology has led the patient-safety movement; Dr. Roizen recruited physicians who are some of the world's safety experts to work in his departments at the University of Chicago and now in the Cleveland Clinic. So when Joint Commission Resources proposed this work, he jumped out of his chair, thrust his fist in the air, and yelled Yes!

He has been continually listed since 1989 in the Best Doctors in America reference. He is an avid squash player (captained the U.S. team in what was the forerunner to the Pan American games in 1984) and Cleveland Cavaliers fan. His wife is a developmental pediatrician, also listed in the Best Doctors in America. The Roizens have two children, Jenny, a PhD graduate student at Caltech in organic chemistry, and Jeffrey, an MD/PhD student at Washington University

in St. Louis. All three were instrumental in advising on this book. He also has all of Mehmet's numbers on speed dial.

Mehmet C. Oz, MD, received his undergraduate degree from Harvard University, his MD from the University of Pennsylvania, and an MBA from Wharton School of Business. He was awarded the Captain's Athletic Award for leadership in college and was president of the student body during medical school. In his New York Presbyterian Hospital-Columbia University practice, Dr. Oz has seen success treating patients with a combination of cutting-edge Western techniques, like minimally invasive surgery, and alternative Eastern therapies, such as meditation, massage, and yoga. His research interests include creation of new devices to repair hearts without surgery, heart transplantation surgery, and health-care policy. He has authored over 400 original publications, book chapters, abstracts, and books, and has received several patents.

In addition to numerous appearances on network morning and evening news programs, Dr. Oz has a series of shows with Oprah, teaching America about health, and is senior medical adviser to the Discovery Channel, where he has hosted several popular series. Dr. Oz also is a member of the RealAge Scientific Advisory Board.

Dr. Oz was elected as a global leader of tomorrow by the World Economic Forum (Davos, Switzerland), was voted the Best and Brightest by Esquire magazine, was elected a Doctor of the Year by Hippocrates magazine, and a Healer of the Millennium by Healthy Living magazine. The Castle Connolly Guide has elected him annually as one of the best physicians in America. Dr. Oz lives in New Jersey with his wife and four children.

The Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations, a private, not-for-profit organization, has been the nation's leader in continuously improving patient safety and health-care quality for more than 50 years. The Joint Commission is the principal standards-setter and evaluator for a variety of health-care organizations, including hospitals, ambulatory care, behavioral health care, home care, laboratories, and long-term care. Joint Commission accreditation is the coveted Gold Seal of Approval and means that a health-care organization complies with the most rigorous standards of performance. And that means safe and quality health care for you.

Joint Commission Resources (JCR) is the publishing and educational not-for-profit affiliate of the Joint Commission. JCR provides practical, solutions-oriented information on health-care quality and medical-error prevention to health-care organizations around the world. In 2005, the World Health Organization designated the Joint Commission and Joint Commission International (a division of JCR) as a Collaborating Centre on Patient Safety Solutions to identify, develop, and disseminate strategies that will reduce or eliminate the occurrence of errors in health-care organizations.

Visit JCR on the Web at www.jcaho.org and www.jcrinc.com.

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