

How do I advocate for a loved one who is in the hospital?

Some basic facts:

- If the patient is currently a chronic pain patient and takes daily prescription opioids, the patient is less likely to receive opioids while in the hospital.
- Chances are the hospitalist is already biased against the patient.

Step by step instructions:

1. Have the patient ask for the charge nurse.
2. If you're on the phone, ask the patient to put you on speaker so you can start a conversation with the charge nurse.
3. Introduce yourself saying:
 - a. "Hello, my name is (insert your name here). I am a patient advocate based out of (insert your location). First, thank you for your hard work during the pandemic. I know you're terribly busy but I imagine we both have the same goal of controlling this patient's pain."
 - b. "Can you please tell me whose care this patient is under? Is the hospitalist a resident? A fellow? Would you kindly provide me with their name, please?"
 - c. "Would you please contact the hospitalist and tell them the patient's pain is unmanaged and he needs adequate pain relief?"
 - d. "If the doctor is unwilling to put in an order for adequate pain medication, would you please tell me why?"
4. If the doctor still doesn't put an order in, the next step is to have risk management, the charge nurse, the hospitalist and the surgeon all come to the patient's room at the same time so you all can have a conversation together.
5. This is a time-consuming but necessary process.
6. Once discharged, if the patient's health was made worse by the treatment received at the hospital, then the next step would be to contact a medical malpractice attorney.

Some more tips:

- Documentation is key. Write down the names of every person you speak with, and exactly what they say to you. This will be very important if you choose to file a complaint with the medical board.
- Hospitals have protection from the feds, so there is no reason pain shouldn't be treated while inpatient.
- Remember, hospitals do have patient advocates, but they work for the hospital, not for the patient.
- If the patient is under a pain management contract, the patient should not accept an opioid prescription upon discharge unless already agreed upon by the pain management doctor. Even

accepting a prescription for 5 pills can cause a patient to be discharged from pain management if it hasn't been discussed in advance.

- If the patient's pain management doctor has agreed to allow the patient to accept a prescription from the hospitalist or surgeon, it's always best to take it to the patient's pharmacy instead of filling it at the hospital's pharmacy.