

## APPENDIX A

# *A Guide to Good Medical Care*

What happened to me clearly illustrates that malpractice does occur. Be careful. Don't let it happen to you. Life is too precious, too delicate, and too short to endure the trials that can come from a doctor's mistake. One simple oversight can potentially be irreversible. From that, I've learned to go on with my life and live by this simple credence: Life is a spiritual mystery to be lived, not a problem to be solved.

There are many good doctors, and modern health care and hospitals have saved and improved many lives. I recently had reconstructive surgery on my shoulder, and the doctors were excellent. But good doctors must be sought out.

It's not only a patient's right, it's their responsibility to be actively involved in their medical care. In order to do this, I recommend learning as much about your medical condition and treatment as possible. There are numerous resources available, from your local library to the Internet.

The following 10 steps are a guide to good medical care.

1. Before arriving at your doctor's appointment, write down any questions you have, or

issues you'd like to discuss. Take these notes with you for this review.

2. If more questions arise during the review, ask them. If anything is unclear, ask your doctor to go over it until you understand. This will make both you and the physician more comfortable. Never begin treatment without a complete understanding of the risks and rewards of that treatment.

3. Feel free to ask your doctor about alternative treatments that you could consider.

4. Ask the doctor if he has had any malpractice suits.

5. Find out how often the doctor performs the procedure. In this day and age of specialization, you should expect experienced treatment.

6. Make sure the doctor you expect to perform the procedure actually does the work. Physicians sometimes schedule resident assistants to do their operations for them. Doctors are often not obliged to tell the patient about this, unless the patient asks. You may request a specific doctor for the procedure.

7. Check with the state medical board to see if your doctor is board certified.

8. After you begin treatment, let the doctor know about any problems that develop. The doctor will also appreciate hearing any good news as well.

9. Keep your pharmacist in the loop. Never assume that any combination of prescription drugs is safe for you to take. Know your medications, and what their purpose is.

10. If you do not feel comfortable with your doctor, it is your right to find another one.

Life is too precious and fragile not to stay involved with your medical treatment.

Be prepared to adjust your agenda. *Life is what happens when you have other plans.*