

Step 5: Use an Advocate / Be an Advocate for Others

Tips for the Advocate When Talking to the Doctor (or another clinician)

- **Always ask the patient if you may ask a question (the patient is in charge). When you do, this gives the patient time to think of more questions.**
- **Be sure to repeat back to the doctor what was said, in words you and the patient understand. Don't just ask the patient "yes or no" questions such as "do you understand?" Instead ask, "Tell me what you heard the doctor say." Or you can say to the doctor, "May we tell you what we heard you say?"**
- **Think of the conversation as a recipe for a cake. If you are missing information or ingredients, the information won't be complete, and the cake won't come out right. Writing down information to be shared is like writing a recipe. It must be complete and understood to work.**
- **Ask the patient if you should ask staff to wash their hands. If the patient wants you to, be sure to be polite and let staff members know that you "are sure they did already, but you would like to see them wash before touching the patient (use patient's name)." The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) reports 90,000 people die from hospital-acquired infections each year.**
- **Ask the doctor what time he/she does rounds after surgery. They may come before visiting hours. If you leave and miss a meeting with the doctor, ask for a phone call if you are the patient's primary advocate. Be sure you have the patient's permission.**
- **Never say "I need," always say "the patient needs," such as: the patient needs to know when she is going home, or the patient needs to know when the doctor will be here.**
- **Encourage the patient to know the three questions from Ask Me 3: What is my main problem? What do I need to do? Why is it important for me to do that?**
- **Encourage the patient to share concerns. Do not talk about the patient without the patient being involved. Ask the patient if you could share information. "May I tell the doctor you don't like taking that medication?"**