ForeWord Reviews

HEALTH & FITNESS

Making Informed Medical Decisions: Where to Look and How to Use What You Find
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The transition from person to patient can be frightening and confusing. Where does one find answers to all kinds of questions? What are the questions that need to be asked? Understanding the confusion that follows a diagnosis, the authors—a medical writer, a medical librarian, and a physician—put together this comprehensive guide.

Written so anyone can access the wide array of information available, either through print material, the Internet, medical personnel, or other patients, guidelines for evaluating what is found are provided. Knowledge of patient rights, knowing how to help a family member or friend, being able to identify resources and access them using effective search strategies are included. Hypothetical questions are posed, “What are the side effects of blood pressure medication,” for example, and the reader is walked through the research process. Included for each hypothetical are the questions a medical librarian might ask prior to beginning a search, places to start looking for information, in this case Medline Plus, and tips for searching. Specific things to look for are mentioned; in the case of blood pressure medication, the reader is directed to look carefully at the numbers of people in each study and where the studies took place. Keeping track of the pros and cons of taking blood pressure medication, having copies of the relevant information, and noting the sources of the information to be used again are useful for future reference and for the physician.

Four chapters are devoted to treatment options, learning how to cope and ways to get support. The final three chapters explain how to use the statistical information available and how to reach personal treatment decisions. All chapters are briefly introduced and are filled with quotes from people who have been patients and understand the process. The voices of the people, both patients and health care professionals, are helpful additions to the factual information.

In addition to chapter notes and a glossary, two appendixes are included: A is a patient

questionnaire designed to assist in the initial research process; B is an impressive list of resources for access to organizations, publications, and Websites.

The authors have met their goal of helping consumers to be informed when making health care decisions. Knowing that ultimately it is the patient who must be making the decisions that affect all aspects of his or her life, this book will offer hope and opportunities to access the best information currently available.

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