

PATRICK MALONE & ASSOCIATES, P.C.

From Tragedy To Justice - Attorneys For The Injured

We win exceptional verdicts and settlements for our clients in cases of brain injury, medical malpractice, wrongful death and other severe injuries.

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Your First Step to the Best Medical Care (One of a series)

Dear Reader,

I'm a little embarrassed.

If I'd been thinking like an organized person, I would have put this essential first step to getting the best medical care as Item One in this series of newsletters. After all, it's Step One in my book, "The Life You Save: Nine Steps ..." All I can say is: Better late than never.

The essential First Step: Get your own medical records and read them.

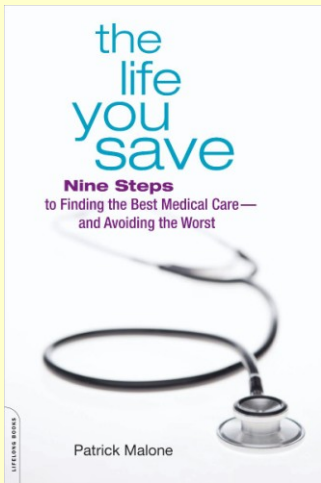
Read on for more details about why this is so and how to protect yourself.

As before: Feel free to "unsubscribe" on the button at the bottom of this email. But if you find it helpful, pass it along to people you care about.

Why Getting and Reading Your Medical Records Can Save Your Life

Reading your own medical records is an essential first step to becoming an informed, proactive patient. It accomplishes a bunch of things all at once.

- You become literate in your own body. You learn the lingo your doctors use and you remind yourself of the concerns your doctors have about you that you might rather not think about.
- You learn a lot about your doctor. Does he or she have an organized set of records? Do they record what you told them in your sessions with reasonable accuracy and completeness? If the answers are no, you might want to think about getting another doctor.
- You can correct errors. Do your records say something about you that's just plain wrong? Or do they leave out something important, like an allergy to a common drug such as penicillin? Now is your chance to fix things before they have bad consequences.
- You can prevent potentially huge failures in communication. People find



abnormal test results in their own records with distressing frequency -- but usually they don't look until it's too late. There are so many test results getting filed into medical records and so many opportunities for miscommunication that you can never assume no news is good news when the doctor's office has failed to tell you about a test result.

You should especially get a copy of every lab report, X-ray study and specialist's report. The easiest way is to start asking for these routinely, up front, when you're about to have the test done. But if you've got any kind of complex medical history, go ahead and ask your primary doctor's office for a copy of your entire chart.

How do you do it?

Just ask. Put it in writing. You have a legal right to your records in all 50 states. Remember, it's your body, and you can save a life, maybe your own, by reading your own records.

Learn More



Read our [Patient Safety Blog](#), which has news and practical advice from the frontlines of medicine for how to become a smarter, healthier patient.



A Great Resource for Getting Your Medical Records

The Georgetown University Center on Medical Record Rights and Privacy has a compilation of state-by-state information about your right to your medical records and how to get them: [Click here](#) to go there.

Decoding Your Records: Here's How

It's easy to be intimidated by medical records, but the good news is that decoding them isn't hard at all. Some resources:

Medical abbreviations: When your doctor says SOB in your records, it's not a curse. It (usually) means Short of Breath. Often there will be a minus sign or plus sign in front of it that means no you don't have it or yes you do. [Here's a website](#) of a pharmacist who has compiled a huge list of other medical abbreviations. If you don't want to pay to get the comprehensive list, you can usually google any term to quickly get its meaning.

Medical test results:

Lab Tests Online lets you look up any lab test and find out why it's given and how to understand your test results. The site is a non-commercial collaboration among professional societies representing the clinical laboratory community, organized by the American Association for Clinical Chemistry. [Here's the site.](#)

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Past issues of this newsletter:

Our first newsletter focused on the problem of conflicts of interest in medicine -- what you need to know in general, and how to find out if your doctor has a conflict that might affect the quality of your care. [Click here](#) to see that newsletter again.

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Newsletter No. 2 expanded the discussion into the related topic of why experience counts -- especially when choosing a surgeon. We focused on the story of minimally invasive prostate surgery with the device called the da Vinci robot. We explained how the lessons apply to any kind of surgery or medical procedure. To see newsletter No. 2 again, [click here](#).

Newsletter No. 3 talked about why "more is not always better" in modern medicine. We focused on cancer screening, especially for breast and prostate cancer, and why you can feel not so guilty if you're a little less aggressive about getting the test. (But if you have any symptoms, you shouldn't wait!) [Click here](#) to read it again.

Newsletter No. 4 talked about choosing a hospital, and why the best known rating systems such as U.S. News & World Report may not be all they're cracked up to be. I give some tips about other ways to make sure your hospital is up to par. Click [here](#) to read it again.

Newsletter No. 5 talked numbers -- how it's important for all consumers of health care who want to make informed choices to learn a little bit about how statistics are used -- and misused -- in health care. I introduced readers how to read medical statistics in a straightforward way. To read it again, [click here](#).

Newsletter No. 6: Back pain and heart disease: how less can be more. The simpler approaches can work just as well as or better than more complex kinds of surgery. [Here's the link](#) to see it again.

Newsletter No. 7: Preventive care: what every adult American needs. [Here's the link](#).

Newsletter No. 8: Colonoscopy: two questions you must ask to make sure you get a competent screening exam. These questions can be a real life-saver when you know how often colonoscopies miss life-threatening lesions. [Read more here](#).

To your continued health!

Sincerely,



Patrick Malone
Patrick Malone & Associates

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