

Nevada

Workers' Compensation Law Blog

NEWS & UPDATES ON WORKERS' COMPENSATION LAWS & HELPFUL INFORMATION ON THE CLAIMS PROCESS

Patient Advocate a Necessity If You Are Hospitalized

March 8, 2012 by [Virginia Hunt](#)

Most injured workers who call me for advice are frustrated with poor medical care or problems obtaining good care as a result of insurance issues. Making sure that injured workers get the best possible medical care is what I do for a living, so I didn't need a personal experience to convince me how important a patient advocate is when a person is ill and hospitalized. Nonetheless, last month I personally got a huge dose myself of bad medicine and lousy insurance practices when I was unexpectedly hospitalized. During my brief (thankfully) hospital stay, the following occurred:

- A typographical error in a CT scan report wasn't caught until after I was given IV medication for another serious condition I did not have.
- I was medicated and then strapped to a gurney and transported at midnight against my wishes to another medical facility from the hospital. My condition was actually worse when I was released from the hospital. This happened without any notification to my family.
- I was lied to by a doctor as to whether a prescribed IV antibiotic could be given at home as opposed to at the dirty secondary facility my insurance company supposedly required for another week.
- I was denied access to my own medical records for several hours while administrators grappled with what the law and their own policy says about patients' rights to review their own records.

These occurred during a 72-hour period when I was too sick to demand that I speak to insurance adjusters and hospital administrators. Fortunately, I have two highly-trained and very loyal legal assistants who stepped up to make sure that nothing worse happened to me. When I was able to talk and demand better care for myself from my insurance company and from medical providers, things changed significantly for the better.

At a minimum, if you or a family member need hospitalization, have someone go with you who can act as a patient advocate. That person should be comfortable with asking a lot of questions, particularly during check-in and discharge. Make sure that your advocate has a list of medications you take daily. Give the phone number of this person to hospital personnel and ask that this person be contacted if you are moved or scheduled for a surgical procedure. Bring a cell phone and a charger with you so that you have easy contact with your advocate and family. Bring a small notebook so that you can keep notes and write down important phone numbers.

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Do not be intimidated, and be persistent in getting answers to your questions as to what is happening to you. Make sure that you understand what treatment you are getting, what medications you are being given, and who ordered them for you. Do not assume that people know what they are doing. Finally, bring a huge bottle of hand sanitizer with you. The [AARP Bulletin](#), March 2012, has frightening statistics on the number of people who are victims of hospital mistakes, and what else you can do to protect yourself when hospitalized.

Virginia Hunt Law Office
1945 E. Warm Springs Road,
Las Vegas, NV 89119
Phone: (702) 699-5336
Fax: (702) 731-9097

Email: virginia@huntlawoffice.com