Workers' Comp

Stop by ‘Any Time’ Medical Care

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Older woman with younger woman smiling in embrace

As her power of attorney for medical care, Mom requested I accompany her to her doctor’s visit so that I could hear details about her intended treatment plan. Mom was 74 years old with a lot of medical conditions that required constant monitoring. I anticipated there would be a lot of coordination between the multiple providers.

When Mom came dressed stunningly in full regalia with necklace, earrings, perfume, and perfectly quaffed hair, I suspected this wasn’t going to be an average doctor’s visit. Never did I anticipate that most weeks she visited the doctor three times a week (Monday, Wednesday and Friday). There were no appointments – The office staff always fits in patients by the end of the of the day, which could span longer than 5 hours of sitting and waiting. The treatment plan focused on keeping Mom stabilized rather than making changes to her routine i.e., comfortable rather than precise. Most interesting was how socializing is a part of the overall visit.

As I sat in her doctor’s waiting room, waiting forever, I reviewed my own goals for medical office visits, which were:

- Annual visits scheduled early in the morning or after hours to avoid cutting into my workday
- Little interest in socializing and chit chat
- Appreciating coffee when offered, but not a prerequisite to going to a certain location
- Obtaining a concise medical plan following my visit
- I prefer using on-line scheduling and telemedicine when offered
- Jeans and T-shirts are appropriate attire
- Philosophy on a successful medical plan was, “Get in/Get Prognosis/Get Treatment Plan/leave”

So, why the disparity from my generation to Mom’s in our visits, expectations and goals? My frustration was in how long it took for the physician to see us. Spending 2-5 hours three times a week to see doctors was excessive and a waste of my time. I wondered if all geriatric practices made their patients wait this long.

In the article, Outpatient Office Wait Times and Quality of Care for Medicaid Patients[1] that monitored the correlation between wait times for private versus Medicaid patients. Its findings highlighted that wait times overall were considerably less than what I experienced with Mom.

Does the ability to “stop by anytime” really exist in today’s medical care? For Mom and other seniors at her doctors - apparently it does. She feels the confidence and comfort gained through a face-to-face meeting with the doctor justifies a 2-5 hour wait.

Perhaps the geriatric physician does understand the senior psyche and complicated medical issues surrounding their patients. In return, they infuse confidence, understanding and flexibility to support walk-in seniors to accommodate their needs.

For me, I’m looking for quick and easy with standard medical offices, clinics and telemedicine services to accommodate my tight schedule and need for work-life balance. Who knows, maybe when I’m older my priorities will shift, but for now, I’d like to keep my office visits as brief as necessary.

This story was submitted by Karen Weitendorf, Director, Work Comp Networks & MCO Implementations, Coventry.

[1]https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5812017/ Tamar Oostrom, Liran Einav, and Amy Finkelstein



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