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VISITING VIGNETTES

A monthly newsletter to all Mended Hearts members.

Fredonia B. Williams, Ed.D.
Mended Hearts National Visiting Chair

The visiting program of the Mended Hearts, Inc. is an organized activity that provides quality support and encouragement to heart patients and their families by visits from trained, accredited personnel who are members of the Mended Hearts organization. All operations of Mended Hearts, at all levels, serve to support the patient and family visiting program for all types of heart disease and treatment. All categories of visits to heart disease patients and their families are the prime objectives of the visiting program. The objective is to visit all heart patients, give them encouragement and hope, give them the **HeartGuide**, a copy of your chapter newsletter and get their contact information. Consider that each visit made by an Accredited Visitor helps a patient who otherwise would not have been touched by an MHI visit. Quality of visits is more important than quantity (number of visits made). The guiding principle must be that a less than ideal visit is better than no visit at all.



Visiting Protocol

Mended Hearts has a general protocol for visiting that includes who is visited and who can visit.

The acronym **SUPPORTS** spells out the steps for patient visiting.

S - sign in or check in

U - use discretion

Knock first and make sure you are not interrupting a private moment between patient and family, friends of staff.

P - ask permission to visit and approach

Introduce yourself and verify that you are visiting the right person. Remain standing. Wait to be invited to sit down. Never sit on the bed.

P - be positive and encouraging

Explain that you have been through a similar experience (within limits) and that you are here today to encourage them and see if they have any questions. It is important to convey that you are doing well.

O - open a conversation

Get the patient to talk. If they don't respond right away by asking you questions, ask them a few open-ended questions to get them started. Examples are:

When did you find out you would need a heart procedure? OR When did you find out about your child's condition? OR

Let the patient or family know you have been in the same kind of situation and ask, "What questions do you have?"

R - respond to questions

Let the patient know they may contact you or your chapter at a later time if they think of anything. Be sure to respond with encouragement and a positive attitude.

T - thank the patient, caregiver or parent

*Let them know how to reach the chapter, hand them a **HeartGuide or Mended Little HeartGuide** or other information like your chapter newsletter or chapter panel card with meeting information. Also, ask them if they would like to be contacted by Mended Hearts.*

S- sign out or check out**Medical advice**

Do not give medical advice. Be sure to tell the patients that you are not a medical professional before you share your experiences and recommend that they seek medical advice from their physician. Feel free to share your experiences, but try to present the most positive side and not dwell on the negative outcomes too much, unless there is a

specific reference or request. It is not necessary to tell your entire heart history in detail. Answer their concerns. It is important not to discuss other heart events that you've had that the patient is not concerned with as this may cause them to be more anxious, thinking they may experience these other events themselves.

Encouragement

Remember encouragement is the word to keep in mind. Our goal is to help give them a brighter outlook. Not everyone will have a positive outcome, but if they have a **brighter** outlook, this may help tremendously in their recovery. Just inform them that every patient is different and what happens to one person may not happen to another. It is all right to let them know it may take some time for

recovery but this depends on a person's overall health, type of procedure, etc. Everyone is special and recovery rate is different. Just let them know there is hope.

Questions

You may find it difficult to answer some questions patients may have. If that is the case, do not try to answer just tell them you can't and that you hope they can find the answer from some other source. You might refer to the **HeartGuide** as having a lot of information on heart disease.

Empathy

Have empathy for the feelings of the heart patient. They have a right to be scared about a heart procedure. It is better to say, "I know how you feel."

Caution

Be brief and don't over visit.

Ending a message

Don't say good luck to the person having a heart event. We hope the success is better than luck. It is better to look ahead and talk about the recovery periods and ask them to keep in touch with you. You may leave by saying, "you're in my thoughts," "keep in touch" or "I would like to hear how you are doing." (You are letting them know that you care).

This might also be a good time to ask if they would like a follow-up call and/or a newsletter. Another "sign off" is to invite them to a meeting when they resume their activities. Sharing with a patient how being a member of Mended Hearts helped you is perfectly okay to add in the final conversation.

As we are members of a formal organization, heart patients assume that we know more than the average heart patient and they attach more significance to what we are saying. Therefore we have to be very careful about what we say in our answers to them. Thank you for all that you do for heart patients and their families. Mended Hearts Accredited Visitors serve heart patients by being there to listen, to share their experiences and to offer encouragement to concerns.

Heartfelt Regards,



Dr. Fredonia B. Williams
National Visiting Chair
Southern Regional Director



Future Questions/Topics

We want to hear from you!

Other challenging questions for this newsletter may be emailed to fredoniabw@att.net.



8150 N. Central Expressway, M2248, Dallas, TX 75206 · 888 - HEART99

Mended Hearts/Mended Little Hearts, 8150 N. Central Expwy., M2248, Dallas, TX 75206

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