Welcome to the October issue of Visiting Vignettes, a monthly visiting newsletter emailed to all members with an email address. The September issue addressed the importance of the Accredited Visitors Rules of Conduct. This issue provides the "why" of each of the rules.

During Accredited Visitor training or reaccreditation, the chairperson presents and explains carefully the Do's and Don'ts of each Rule of Conduct.

Be prepared to answer the "why" for each of the rules. Most of the reasons are obvious, but a few often raise questions. Typically they are:

**I Will - Rule #2** - Visit for the benefit of the patient, family or caregiver, not for personal reasons.

Sharing their experience is important for Accredited Visitors, but they have to learn before their first visit that they tell the patient only the basics of what they have been through. Usually, those who feel compelled to discuss their experience at length are not ready to be Accredited Visitors.

**I Will Not - Rule #5** - Discuss medical costs or finances. Instead I will refer the patient or family to the social services department.

Some patients face financial problems after hospitalization, and this may be a priority for them at the time. Accredited Visitors must not get involved in a discussion of the cost of medical care and the problems that arise from it, because this is often a depressing subject for someone in the hospital. Explain that Mended Heart does not raise money for hospitalization and that patients should contact the hospital social services department.

**I Will Not - Rule #6** - Place excess emphasis on my medical experiences or hospitalization or my child’s in relation to those of the patient or parent's child.

Discussing the details of what an Accredited Visitor has gone through may give the impression that they are still suffering. Accredited Visitors are there to show that a person can lead a productive life, not leave the impression that patients will be in and out of hospitals for the rest of their lives. That is the impression that patients will get if they are told that the Accredited Visitor has had more than one surgery, heart attack, etc. Be honest. If asked, tell the patient the date of the most current heart event. The
patient often is judging his own recovery and longevity by what the Accredited Visitor says.

**I Will Not - Rule #7** - Act as an advocate or representative for a particular hospital or medical facility.

Visitors usually feel very loyal to their own surgeon or cardiologist, and comparing theirs to the patient's only causes anxiety for patients. Mended Hearts Accredited Visitors cannot promote any particular hospital or doctor.

**I Will Not - Rule #11** - Express religious or spiritual beliefs to the patient and/or family.

A Mended Hearts Accredited Visitor is there, not as a member of a particular church or faith, but as a Mended Heart member. For that reason, they should not discuss religion or offer to pray for the patient. If the patient expresses the desire for prayer, the Accredited Visitor might offer to include the patient in his prayers at home or offer to contact the hospital Chaplain.

Prayer with an individual is a very personal issue, and the patient or family may not feel comfortable refusing to pray with the Accredited Visitor. Prayer on an individual basis also gives the perception that Mended Hearts is an organization for those of a particular faith and may, therefore, keep someone from joining. Mended Hearts is not trying to restrict Accredited Visitors' religious beliefs, but it is impossible to represent all religions and not offend those who have no religious beliefs.

Avoid subjects that might be controversial or upsetting to the patient. Religion and politics fall under these categories.

At the same time of the discussion of the Rules of Conduct, a discussion of the Accredited Visitor's viewpoint might be beneficial. What do Accredited Visitors expect from the program.

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**It's great to be alive...and to help others!**

Help us live up to this motto and support TAVR patients. People who are about to have a TAVR procedure are often scared and want to talk to someone who has had a TAVR and find out more about his procedure.

**What Is the TAVR Visiting Program?**

The TAVR Visiting Program is a telephone visiting program where people who have had a TAVR call those about to have a TAVR.

**What Are the Requirements to Be A TAVR Visitor?**

People who have had a TAVR and are willing to call people who are about to have a TAVR go through a one-hour telephone visitor training, are provided with an Accredited Visitor Handbook, and are placed on a list so we can contact them if someone who is about to have a TAVR would like a call.

TAVR visitors do not need to be fully accredited visitors to make phone calls. They must agree to confidentiality. A TAVR visitor does not have to be a member of a specific chapter, but we do let them know about chapters near them, if any, and encourage them to go to a meeting.
If a TAVR visitor would like to become a fully accredited Mended Hearts hospital visitor, he or she must be a member of a Mended Hearts chapter and go through the full training with observed visits. This visitor must work with the chapter Visiting Chair.

**How Are TAVR Visitors Selected?**

People who have had a TAVR might contact you locally or Mended Hearts nationally requesting to be a visitor. Where possible chapter can work with hospital valve coordinators to find new TAVR visitors.

**What Happens After We Find a TAVR Visitor?**

If you find a TAVR visitor, please contact your National Resource Center at 1-888-HEART99 (1-888-432-7899) and let us know. We will let you know when the next telephone training is so the TAVR visitor can join the call. The chapter leader is welcome to join the call with the visitor.

**How Do We Track TAVR Visits?**

If you have TAVR visitors in your chapter, please count their visits the same was you would any telephone visits, but please also KEEP A SEPARATE TALLY of TAVR visits. We need this number.

For a full TAVR Chapter Toolkit, click [HERE](#).

For a TAVR flyer that you can put in hospitals, clinics, and waiting rooms, click [HERE](#).

For TAVR Visiting Program information to give to your local hospital that does TAVR, click [HERE](#).

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Heartfelt Regards,

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

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**Future Questions/Topics**

We want to hear from you!

Other challenging questions for this newsletter may be emailed to fredoniabw@att.net.
Mended Hearts/Mended Little Hearts, 1500 Dawson Road, Albany, GA 31707

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