

Hip Replacement Surgery: Part of the Problem or Part of the Solution

ME Hecht*

Singers Development Foundation, USA

***Corresponding Author:** ME Hecht, Singers Development Foundation, USA.

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Suppose you've just been told you need hip surgery, have a cardiac condition, or you've developed diabetes. At this moment you are most likely to be in a doctor's office, in point of fact the diagnosing doctor's office, possibly in some state of undress, or having just come from an x-ray, or EKG.

There's no doubt about it, as an experience, it's up front and personal, not matter how succinct and professional the announcement-up front, personal, and threatening as hell. I mean the doctor may have run several miles this morning, had a carb loaded breakfast, or not a scrap of pain in any of his major or minor joints, he's in good shape. But you've just been told your body has betrayed you. What's more, if you're a card player you could say at this point, that you're the doctor holds cards, spades, and big Casino.

"Fear of the unknown or poorly understood, at the very least renders us, disabled, open to the worst of imaginings, and invites defeatism. Knowledge or information is your very real and active buckler and shield."

- Dr. M.E. Hecht

In short, it can be a moment of inequality second to none. However, at this moment when you may feel at your most physically and possibly emotionally vulnerable, you actually can turn the situation to your advantage. I mean you may not be able to alter the diagnosis, BUT it is both your right and responsibility on your own behalf to pose YOUR questions, about the diagnosis, what it means, what can be done, how to handle it. And these are only the beginning of what you can do on your own behalf. Let there be no uncertainty, if you have the answers to these questions, if you insist on understanding what has happened to your body, you are on the road to being part of the solution, not part of the problem. How you may reasonably ask.

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1. Most physicians are delighted when their patient wants to know as much as possible about his condition. And will encourage him to 'read up' on the subject.
2. Most physicians simply cannot find enough hours in the day even if they wanted, to ensure patient has the fullest understanding of his present health status, although they know this is more than desirable
3. Most physicians, be they surgeons, cardiac specialists or whatever, know that the informed patient is going to be one who helps achieve the most positive outcome to his medical problem.

The point I would urge you to act on comes from the realization that the chances are you won't be able to get a full grasp on the first doctor's visit. Anxiety, fear, or simple surprise is factors that work negatively as far as understanding goes. And even more often the feeling many patients have of being entirely on the receiving end of an unequal dialogue, when their vulnerability has just been made patent, and they're trying to deal with the feeling.

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So how do you get from that position, to the position of using knowledge as an edge advantage in dealing with your condition? How do you mentally go from being a 90 pound weakling to an upward and onward frame of mind figuratively speaking? How can you illicit from your physician, the cardinal points of your treatment, and prognosis so you are better equipped to deal with critical matters?

1. Immediately make a second appointment with your doctor, simultaneously making clear that your appointment time will be focused on your 'need to know'.
2. Go to Wikipedia, or if you have one, the Merck manual of medicine (a cogent, organized source of information), or start on line research about your condition.

I list online research, knowing that some information gained thus is reliable, but some may be speculative, or biased in terms of one treatment or medication or another. But it is still information, and your research will ultimately tell you what is to be accepted and used, and what to be dis-regarded.

1. Talk to the smartest, most balanced friend or relative you know, who has the same condition, about some of the problems he has faced.
2. Ask such a person in your life to come along on tis second office visit. (two ears, and two memories being better than one).

Then sit at your desk or computer and print out the essential questions you want answered.

How do you start to formulate a list of questions? Everyone has different 'need to knows'- but think what you would advise a dear friend to ask.

Or you can start with, things as simple as-

1. What is it I have (not just the name)
2. What are the treatment options?
3. How will my lifestyle be affected?
4. What can I do to improve my condition?
5. What is the prognosis-or what does the future hold for me

And you will automatically become a part of a requisite dialogue.

Yes, your doctors holds the advantage of many of the answers, but your knowledge and interest in your own condition, produce recognition of a degree of medical informational parity, and will encourage if not oblige him to be as informative as possible.

Lastly any doctor will tell you if you haven't already doped it out for yourself, that an informed patient is part of the solution not part of the problem.

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