



Lessons Learned:

Have an advocate: Never leave your loved one alone in a hospital. Families and friends need to work together in shifts. Maintain a bedside presence 24/7. If the patient is leaving for a procedure, go with him or her.

Question or ignore "The Rules" regarding visiting hours.

Write it down: Keep a journal and write down everything, even if it doesn't seem important. What time rounds were completed, what tests, therapies, procedures, course of action was ordered.

Ask Questions: "Did you wash your hands?" Question anything that doesn't agree with your journal, what you heard the doctor order. Monitor and verify medications for accuracy before they are administered. Know why you (or your loved one) is getting that drug, test, procedure, et al. Understand what is happening and why it is happening. Follow your instincts.

Control infections: Wash your hands, wear gloves, insist the staff do same. Do not pick up items off the floor. Keep hand sanitizer and antibacterial wipes near the bedside. Use them often, wipe down bedrails, tv remote, doorknobs, etc.

Risk Management: If you have concerns that are not being addressed satisfactorily, skip over patient relations type people and ask to speak directly to Risk Management.

Avoid teaching hospitals New students rotate in every month, you don't know if you're talking to a student or a seasoned physician. Communication problems and chaos can be at their prime in teaching hospitals.

Schedule surgeries for Monday morning. Everybody is awake, alert and refreshed. Typically the equipment is at its most sanitary on a Monday morning.

X Marks the Spot: Mark your surgical site with a letter "X" with a non-toxic writing instrument.

Assume the Worst: Count on the fact things will go wrong, fall between the cracks, not get done, or done wrong. Follow up on everything.

Get Out: The longer you are in a hospital, the sicker you are likely to get.

