



The International Patient's Bill of Rights

Every year, increasing numbers of patients cross international borders to seek medical care. Whatever their reasons for doing so, they face challenges both similar to and beyond those that patients encounter at home. Because of language barriers, lack of medical knowledge, or their presenting health status, these patients are often the most vulnerable to misunderstanding – and mistreatment.

To serve all patients, whatever their diagnosis or national origins, we propose an International Patient's Bill of Rights and Responsibilities.

International Patient's Bill of Rights and Responsibilities

Patient's Rights:

As an individual seeking medical attention outside your home community, **you have the right to:**

1. **Understand these rights**, have them explained to you in detail, and discuss them with your caregiver and/or your family.
2. **Respect**, including respect for your human dignity and your personal values and beliefs, without regard to national origin, language, race, color, religion, ancestry, medical diagnosis, mental or physical disability, genetic information, educational background, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, economic status, or the source of payment for care.
3. **Have a family member or other person of your choosing present** during examinations, tests, and meetings with your doctors. This includes your reasonable right to designate visitors during in-patient care in keeping with your health care facility's restrictions.
4. **Have a translator or interpreter present** during examinations, tests, and meetings with your doctors. This may be someone you designate or someone provided by the medical facility.

5. **Know the name of the physician** who will be coordinating your care and the names and professional relationships of other physicians and non-physicians who will see you.
6. **Inquire about a physician's qualifications related to your condition**, such as education, medical license, board certification and recertification, years of practice, and experience in performing recommended procedures.
7. **Inquire about the health care facility**, including accreditation status, experience in performing recommended procedures and services, and presence of or access to appropriate technology.
8. **Receive a thorough evaluation by knowledgeable providers** and screening activities that facilitate disease detection, including, if appropriate, the option of genetic testing and counseling.
9. **Receive information**, in terms you can understand, about your current health status, your options for treatment, the risks and benefits of each option, details about the course of treatment, your prospects for recovery, and the possible and probable outcomes of receiving or refusing care.
10. **Have your home physician(s) notified** of your diagnosis, treatment, and/or admission to the hospital.
11. **Have access to the best international resources** and information related to your diagnosis and condition.
12. **Receive a full spectrum of treatment options.**
13. **Seek a second opinion.**
14. **Receive care in a clean and medically safe environment.**
15. **Receive care in a safe setting**, free from verbal or physical abuse, harassment, coercion, discipline, or neglect.
16. **Receive care in a non-smoking room.**
17. **Be free of blame for having a disease** or of guilt for surviving it.
18. **Make decisions about your medical care** and receive as much information as you may need about any proposed treatment,

procedure, or medication in order to give informed consent or to refuse a course of treatment.

19. **Request and receive, prior to treatment, an estimate of charges** for your medical care.
20. **Be advised if your physician proposes to perform research, experimentation, or clinical trials** affecting your care or treatment. You have the right to a full explanation and you have the right to agree or to refuse to participate in such research projects, and your refusal will not affect the standard of your medical care.
21. **Be advised if your physician or treatment facility has any financial interest** in specific treatments or medications, including those in clinical trial.
22. **Receive care from a multidisciplinary team** of qualified health care providers, including nurses, with specialized knowledge, who successfully complete ongoing programs that demonstrate their competence.
23. **Receive referrals to qualified specialists**, as deemed necessary and appropriate by your physician.
24. **Prepare advance directives** that will be honored by medical personnel. Such directives may include your designation of a decision maker in the event you become incapable of understanding a proposed treatment or become unable to communicate your wishes regarding care. You may also indicate your preferences on issues related to resuscitative services and your desire for or against life-sustaining treatment, within the confines of the applicable law.
25. **Receive complete education about and access to comfort care**, including therapies that decrease pain, reduce the side effects of treatment, and improve quality of life. This includes your right to participate in pain management decisions.
26. **Respect for your privacy**, including the confidential treatment of all written and electronic records, the use of privacy curtains in semi-private rooms, and the right to privacy during case discussion, consultation, examination, and treatment.
27. **Receive skilled emergency care** if you need it.

28. **Access to psychological counseling and support groups** to help you and your loved ones deal with the stresses of your diagnosis, treatment, and outlook.
29. **Receive information about rules**, policies, and expectations for patients at the medical facility where you are receiving care.
30. **Timely response** to your requests for treatment, information, or other inquiries.
31. **Continuity of care**, including information about the time and location of your future appointments.
32. **Review your medical record**. This includes your right to obtain a copy of your medical record, for which you may be charged a reasonable fee.
33. **Continue or discontinue treatment** regardless of how mild or advanced your condition may be, but without holding the hospital or doctors responsible for any medical consequences should you choose to do so against the advice of the doctor.
34. **Transfer your care** to another physician or facility and authorize your medical records, including medical imaging, to be forwarded to your new doctor or facility.
35. **Receive, in writing, a discharge plan**, including information about continuing health care requirements following your discharge from treatment and a description of how you can appeal your discharge.
36. **Leave the hospital**, even against the advice of physicians, to the extent permitted by law.
37. **Examine and receive an explanation of all charges for your care** regardless of the source of payment.
38. **File a complaint** regarding your medical provider or facility without fear of reprisals.
39. **Long-term follow-up** that focuses on health maintenance, quality of life, and prompt detection and treatment of disease.
40. **Culturally, spiritually and ethically competent end-of-life care** that focuses on symptom management, pain control,

psychosocial support for patients and their families, hospice care, and bereavement counseling.

41. **Add information to your medical records** by providing relevant reports and information before admission and/or after discharge.
42. **Update your demographic data** at any hospital through procedures that guarantee accuracy, credibility and confidentiality of updated information.

Patient's Responsibilities:

1. **Work together with your health care providers** to develop and carry out agreed-upon treatment plans and ongoing therapies.
2. **Ask questions** if you do not understand information, medical terms, the specifics of your treatment, or what is expected of you.
3. **Take responsibility** for cultivating healthy habits, such as exercising, not smoking, and eating a healthy diet.
4. **Consult with your physician** before self-medicating or seeking alternative therapies, including herbal medicines, that might interfere with your ongoing treatment.
5. **Disclose relevant information** to your doctors and nurses, both during and after your treatment, including unexpected changes in your condition, new symptoms, or increased pain.
6. **Clearly communicate** your wants and needs.
7. **Show respect** for other patients and health workers.
8. **Take all possible precautions** against spreading disease.
9. **Keep your appointments.** If you are unable to do so for any reason, notify your health care provider.
10. **Make a good-faith effort** to meet your financial obligations.
11. **Provide complete and accurate information** including your personal demographic data, and update the data if changed.