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100% Effective Natural Hormone Treatment
Menopause, Andropause And Other Hormone Imbalances
Impair Healthy Healing In People Over The Age Of 30!

MEDICAL RECORDS: Can I See Them or Not?

By Lisa Copen

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I was to see the surgeon about the broken tendon in my hand and so was handed a large folder containing my medical records to take with me to the other side of the hospital. It was the first time I was pleased to have to wait to see the physician. I skimmed the records as quickly as I could, shocked at the large amount of information that I had shared with my doctor about my condition which was omitted from the records.

He had dismissed my most recently complaints of pain from active rheumatoid arthritis as "likely caused by stress of breaking up with boyfriend." I now knew where I stood with this doctor, based on his scrawled inaccurate descriptions of our visits.

The nurse appeared and witnessed me reading my documents and in exasperation claimed, "You're not supposed to be reading that!" grabbing the folder out of my hand.

"They're my records," I said, "I don't understand why I can't."

"You just can't," she flustered. "It's not ethical."

She was wrong.

CAN I GET A COPY OF MY MEDICAL RECORDS?

Usually. Most states allow patients to review their

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medical information, but some states don't address the issue at all. Some may place restrictions on the information you can get, for example, psychiatric information is most difficult to receive.

IS THE INFORMATION MINE?

Technically, the documents belong to whoever made them, but in most cases the information about you belongs to you. Contact the your State Department of Health to find out your rights in your state. The number is in your local yellow pages or at the FDA web site at: www.fda.gov/oca/sthealth.htm.

Even in states where the law is restrictive or unclear, many medical providers will provide your records to you anyway, according to the American Health Information Management Association, the "keepers" of the nation's health records. If you received care in a federal medical facility, you have a right to access your record under the federal Privacy Act of 1974 (5USC Section 552a).

HOW DO I REQUEST A COPY OF MY RECORDS?

Ask your doctor's staff, hospital records clerk or other appropriate person for a patient authorization form that allows the release of information. You can also write a letter, just be sure to include the following information:

- + Your full name and date of birth, date of treatment
- + Name and address of the person or facility to which disclosure is to be made
- + The specific kind and amount of information to be disclosed, such as laboratory results, X-rays or the doctor's notes on your chart.
- + The purpose of the request, for example, "continuing care" or "insurance."
- + Your signature and the date

IS THERE A CHARGE?

It's likely you will be charged \$.25 to \$.50 per page, however, you can request specific information to help keep the costs down. Your request cannot be denied even if you still owe your doctor money for appointments. If you are collecting them for a third-party, keep a copy for yourself so you don't

have to pay for them in the future.

WHAT IF I DON'T AGREE WITH THE INFORMATION OR AM DENIED ACCESS?

The American Health Information Management Association has a sample for called "Request for Correction/Amendment of Health Information" that you can complete and file at <http://www.ahima.org/consumer/index.html> . You can also locate your local state disclosure laws at the Health Privacy Project at <http://www.healthprivacy.org> .

Lisa Copen is the founder of Rest Ministries, a Christian organization that serves people who live with chronic illness or pain. Living with rheumatoid arthritis and fibromyalgia, she is a speaker/author and the coordinator of National Invisible Chronic Illness Awareness Week. Her latest resource, "A Woman's

Health Resource Journal" has been called, "a disability lawyer's dream." <http://www.womanshealthjournal.com>

Getting the Necessary Paperwork Ready

By Paul Hod

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A good grasp of the inner workings of disability claim benefits will significantly increase claimant's chances of having his request approved. Understanding the procedures as well as the criteria used in evaluating your claims is a must if you want to receive the benefit you rightfully deserve. It is next to impossible to win at something when you do not know the rules that apply. Of course it will be a lot in favor of the opposing team if they alone know the regulations in effect. Consider this, if you are not aware of what should be done, you will never know if the rules that should be applied is being followed at all. Remember that the people making decisions that will affect you are only human and prone to make mistakes.

The first problem every applicant for social security disability faces is the sudden realization that what is disability to you, to your doctor, to any one with common sense, may not be disability as defined by social security. Of course it goes without saying that the people who will determine whether you are legible will have a very different opinion what is disabled and what is not.

Social security disability has a very fact specific set of rules, regulations, tables, and agency policies that are used to determine whether a claimant for disability meets the definition and criteria of disability under the social security system– for the purposes of entitlement to benefits. What seems to you like a fairly simple determination – are you or are you not disabled – becomes something subject to

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determination according to a set of criteria that often defies common sense and logic.

Scott E. Davis states below the importance of documents in settling your disability claim:

There is no substitute for well documented medical records. Medical records are critical because judges review them to determine if your story regarding chronic pain and fatigue add up. The medical records also set up and support your doctor's opinion that you are unable to work. You can win with poorly documented records but it's not easy.

Judges review your medical records for the consistency of medical care, and whether there is an explanation for your symptoms. Obtaining all available medical tests such as MRI's, x-rays, laboratory work and clinical evaluations from numerous specialists is important."



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