

## Surviving the American healthcare system

Becoming an effective patient  
The healthcare system is a perilous place for patients these days, and is becoming more so by the day. If you've spent any time with the Understanding It section of this website, you understand why: The American healthcare system is fully committed to a program of covert rationing, and covert rationing requires the destruction of the doctor-patient relationship. Patients, consequently, have been marginalized and isolated within an increasingly hostile healthcare system. What's more, that marginalization and isolation has been systematic, and nearly purposeful.

For anybody who finds themselves playing the role of "patient" in the healthcare system today, the most immediate question is: "What can I do to protect myself now?"

It turns out there are several things you can do, despite the cards stacked against you, to become a more effective patient - that is, to optimize your chances of achieving a good outcome when you need healthcare. This means taking charge of your own healthcare, and by so doing, immunizing yourself against covert rationing.

This is not a trivial task. Indeed, there's nothing more frustrating than having to solve your own medical problems. No matter how much time you spend searching the Internet, listening to the accumulated wisdom of your Great Aunt Hilda, or engaging in games of Twenty Questions with taciturn medical personnel, you can never be sure you've got the right answer. The "system" today is not geared toward helping you; on the contrary, it wants and needs you to remain at least partially in the dark. That's what covert rationing is all about.

Still, there's a lot you can do to protect yourself within the healthcare system. You can empower yourself with knowledge. You can manage your relationship with your doctor so that, when it becomes time to covertly ration, perhaps you will be that patient for whom he occasionally goes the extra mile. You can learn how to better manage your health plan. You can do the best possible job of managing your own health. And you can try to identify an advocate who will help guide you through it all.

In the following sections, we will discuss each of these pathways to self-empowerment.