



If You're a Health Care Consumer, Speak Up!

A national program, urging patients to take a role in preventing health care errors by becoming more active participants on their own health care teams was launched in 2002 by the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO) and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). Titled, "Speak Up," the program offers the following framework for consumers to take charge of their health action plans:

- S**peak up if you have questions or concerns, and if you don't understand, ask again. It's your body and you have a right to know.
- P**ay attention to the care you are receiving. Make sure you're getting the right treatments and medications by the right health care professionals. Don't assume anything.
- E**ducate yourself about your diagnosis, the medical tests you are undergoing, and your treatment plan.
- A**sk a trusted friend or family member to be your advocate.
- K**now what medications you take and why you take them. Medication errors are the most common health errors.
- U**se a hospital, clinic, surgery center, or other type of health care organization that has undergone a rigorous on-site evaluation against established state-of-the-art quality and safety standards, such as that provided by JCAHO.
- P**articipate in all decisions about your treatment. You are the center of the health care team.



Pardon Me?

Did you know that poor communication between doctors and patients can result in health care-related errors that lead to injuries? Fact is, these preventable errors cost us all nearly \$15 billion each year!

Source: Institute of Medicine "To Err is Human: Building a Safer Health System," 1999.