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Knasas: You have to be your own advocate

By Marie Knasas/Ask-A-Nurse

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MEDFORD - **Question:** I was recently in the hospital and I needed home care services when I went home. I told the hospital that I already had a visiting nurse, but they said they also had a visiting nurse.

I liked the visiting nurse that I already was using, don't I get to say who I want to come and choose the agency that I want.

Thanks for helping me get some clarification. L.B.

Response: L.B. you are absolutely correct. Patients have rights!

One of the rights a patient has is the right to choose the agency that will provide services to them at home. Many hospital systems have their own home care agencies. Rehabilitation and nursing facilities may have preferred providers, but you have the right to choose the home care agency that will provide services to you or your loved one.

Ultimately the home care agency is treating you or your loved one and unless you have been deemed unable to make decisions for yourself or your loved one is unable to make their own decisions, then certainly you can choose your home care agency.

You should always keep the information concerning any home care agency you are currently using or want to use for home care services in your wallet or purse. This way the information is readily accessible to you so that you can inform the hospital or other health care facility that you have a preference when it comes to home care services.

If you have a preferred agency let your family and primary physician know your preference. Let them help advocate for your wishes.

Some facilities may have erroneous information and tell you that the home care agency you chose is not available, not in business or doesn't service your town. Be an informed consumer and know the information about the home care agency you have chosen. Don't be afraid to share that information with the healthcare providers. Don't be afraid to speak up for what you want and let your desires be known with the individual who is making the discharge plans.

You need to advocate for what you want.

If you go home and the home care agency that has come out to service you is not the one you wanted. Don't be afraid to tell the agency that came out that you prefer another agency. If they say that is not possible then

call the home care agency you want and let them know you want them to be your home care provider.

Never be afraid to speak up and ask for the home care agency that you want. You are the consumer and you do have the right to choose!!

If you have any questions you would like to see answered in this column please e-mail askanurse@gmvna.com or write Ask-A-Nurse at Greater Medford VNA, 278 Mystic Ave., Suite 204, Medford, MA 02155.

— *Marie Knasas is the executive director of Greater Medford VNA. Ask-A-Nurse is an informational column of Greater Medford VNA. Greater Medford VNA has been your local provider of VNA services for over 100 years.*

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