'Life-saving conversations': How to advocate for yourself in the health-care system Misericorida urgent care centre to close, Victoria Hospital ER to become urgent care centre next week By Aidan Geary, CBC News Posted: Oct 01, 2017 5:00 AM CT Last Updated: Oct 01, 2017 5:00 AM CT

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the best care you can. Twitter "Patient advocacy, or as we like to call it, self-advocacy ... is invaluable anytime," said Laurie Thompson, executive director of the Manitoba

Institute for Patient Safety.

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"Possibly in particular when there's changes to the system that are making people just a little uncomfortable with where they should go and what they should do." Is it an emergency? The difference between an ER and urgent

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In the midst of what Manitoba's health minister has called "the most significant change in the health-care system in a generation," a pair of

experts on patient advocacy have advice on how to ensure you're getting

may need to Next week, the emergency room at Winnipeg's Victoria General Hospital will become an urgent care centre and Misericordia's urgent care centre

will shut down — the first big moves to realize a dramatic change to the

city's health-care system announced earlier this year by the province and

Do you know what an Access centre is? Because soon you

the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority. Under the changes, Health Sciences Centre, St. Boniface Hospital and

Grace Hospital will become the primary hospitals offering emergency

care, CBC News spoke to Thompson and another expert to get their tips on how to advocate for yourself in the health-care system. Recruit an advocate

Thompson said the most important advice she can provide is to find an

Sandi Kossey, senior director of strategic partnerships and priorities for

advocate to accompany you when you meet with your health-care

the Canadian Patient Safety Institute, echoed that suggestion.

providers, and to do it before you actually need one.

ask some of the questions on behalf of the patient."

siblings or friends are all options to consider.

expectations, Thompson said.

Come prepared

their concerns," she said.

Bring information

With changes coming to where many Manitobans will access their health

The emergency room at Seven Oaks General Hospital will also be

converted to an urgent care centre in 2018. Concordia Hospital's

emergency room will close altogether next year.

She said it's important to have a friend or family member "as a support, certainly, but also somebody who can remember, and another pair of ears to listen to some of the conversation, [who] can take notes or can even

Your advocate should be someone you trust and preferably someone

you've known for a while, Thompson said. Neighbours, parents, children,

A successful candidate should be someone you think is a good listener

Safety When you've identified the person you want to be your advocate, you need to sit down and have an honest conversation about your

She recommended using a downloadable patient safety agreement,

accessible on the Manitoba institute's website, to guide the conversation.

but who you also trust to speak up with questions or concerns, she added.

My Patient Advocate Agreement: Manitoba Institute for Patient

Self-advocacy can start before you walk into the doctor's office, with making a list of your health concerns and questions to take with you when the time comes, Thompson said.

"It's important that people are informed, and they can be informed before

The Manitoba institute has online forms you can use to help do that, she

they go into an encounter with their health provider by making a list of

S.A.F.E. Toolkit: Manitoba Institute for Patient Safety If you don't have time to write out a full list, Thompson said it's also helpful

to simply identify your single biggest concern.

said, and your advocate can be part of the process, too.

Full coverage of health cuts in Manitoba

that you can share it." Trying to 'change the culture of medicine' by letting patients

"It's really important that you have that personal information with you so

Whether it's recorded digitally on your phone or handwritten on paper,

Kossey said it's useful to have the information in written form to make

In addition to your list of questions and concerns, Kossey said you should

changed, if you've had any symptoms, if you've had any other referrals or

walk into the hospital with a record of your personal health information.

"You know your health best. You know if any medications have been

sure you don't forget anything in the moment. "Something that maybe a care provider asks you, you may not think is relevant or related, but sometimes those details will help improve your

Ask the right questions

What is my health problem?

What do I need to do?

from there," Thompson said.

do I watch for?

delivery room

Follow up

Why do I need to do this?

Kossey said.

start:

seen any specialists," Kossey said.

decide what gets researched

care and the safety of your care," she said.

"That's really important ... encouraging patients and their health-care providers to have important conversations about their health and about keeping themselves safe during their care," she said.

Kossey and Thompson both stressed the importance of asking the right

The Manitoba Institute for Patient Safety has prescribed three general

questions through its It's Safe to Ask program that will give a place to

questions when you're with your health-care provider.

The mantra of the Canadian Patient Safety Institute is "ask, listen, talk,"

The Canadian institute has also developed its own list of questions to ask that are specific to medication, Kossey added. "Both patients and health-care providers can use them as a basis for

"Those three questions can really set up a conversation and then it goes

After your appointment, Thompson said it's good to get into the habit of writing down what you can about the meeting and any information about the next one. "When you come out of a health-care interaction, be it the pharmacy or

If you want those questions answered before your next appointment, Thompson said you should feel empowered to call and ask for more clarity.

your pharmacist — she's done it multiple times.

If your question concerns medication, Thompson recommended calling

If the question is better posed to a doctor, she suggested calling the office and leaving a message with your physician. You may have to wait slightly longer to get an answer, but many physicians check messages at the end

the Manitoba Institute for Patient Safety and the Canadian Patient Safety Institute.

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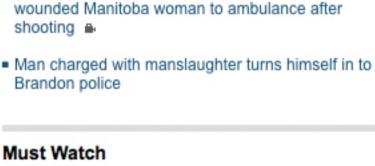
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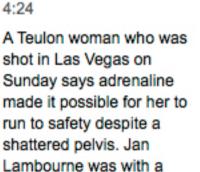
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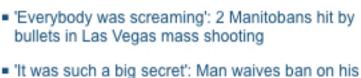
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having conversations, life-saving conversations, about safely using medication," she said. Those questions are:

What medications do I need to keep taking, and why?

Do I need any tests and when do I book my next visit?

How do I take my medications, and for how long?

Have any medications been added, stopped or changed, and why?

How will I know if my medication is working, and what side effects

the emergency or wherever, write down what you think you heard," she said. "Write down your discharge instructions. You may, when you get home, in reviewing that, have other questions. So write down those questions."

8 tips to help maternity patients advocate for themselves in

of the day, she said. You can find more resources about patient advocacy online through

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