

Karen Anderson

An Advocate for the Parkinson's Community

Six years ago, Karen Anderson's husband, Roger, went into the hospital to undergo surgery for a herniated disc. This should have been a fairly straightforward procedure except for one thing, he had Parkinson's disease. Like any spouse, she was nervous about the operation but assumed that her husband was in good hands.

Karen was not prepared for what was to come. After explaining Roger's medication schedule to the medical team, she was astonished to find out how unaware they were about this part of his care. With each shift change, she had to go over his medication schedule with every new doctor and nurse. And when Karen wasn't by her husband's side, he didn't get his medication on time. He was even given a drug not meant for Parkinson's patients.

As time went on, the situation got worse—Roger suffered hallucinations and couldn't communicate with the doctor. "It was a horrible nightmare that I could not wake up from," recalls Karen of that alarming experience. "Here I was, the distraught spouse trying to fight for my husband's life—and I had to constantly find ways to care for him."



Therefore, if you ask Karen how she became an advocate for people with Parkinson's, she'll tell you she didn't have a choice. She's been on this road for more than twenty years with her husband, who was diagnosed with Parkinson's at the age of 47. As a full-time caregiver, she's advocated for her husband every step of the journey. Looking forward, she plans to make sure every person with Parkinson's has an advocate for good care when they need it the most—in the hospital.

Last year, Roger had to go back in the hospital for surgery but this time Karen was proactive. She consulted with his



Karen and Roger Anderson—the retired couple lives in Oregon.

surgeon beforehand and made copies of his medication schedule for everyone on staff.

*"The **Aware in Care** kit is a life-saver; as a person with Parkinson's or a caregiver, you have a role to play in advocating for your own quality care. Make sure you carry your medication list with you and be aware of the medications you take and what happens if you don't take them," stress both Karen and Roger.*

Karen and Roger Anderson are both active members of the NPF Chapter, Parkinson's Resources of Oregon.

5 REASONS TO BECOME AWARE IN CARE

- 1) 3 out of 4 people with Parkinson's disease don't get their medication on time in the hospital.
- 2) Only 25% of neurologists surveyed say they are confident that they would be contacted if their patients were admitted to the hospital.
- 3) 70% of neurologists report that their patients do not get the medications they need when hospitalized.
- 4) People with Parkinson's are hospitalized 50% more than their peers without the condition.
- 5) People with Parkinson's suffer avoidable complications at a higher rate than people without Parkinson's, resulting in longer hospital stays and a higher risk of mortality.

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to order a free **Aware in Care** kit.**