

Aware in Care: Making a World of Difference

Living with Parkinson's for the last four years, Marty Gershe, 71, knows first-hand the importance of being prepared for a hospital stay. His many trips to the hospital often left him frustrated with staff who did not fully understand the complexities of Parkinson's and the importance of getting him his medications on time.

"It was a constant battle to get my meds on time," he said. "And when I don't get my meds on time, I can't function—my speech is affected, my walking is affected and my general well-being is affected."



Marty Gershe with his Aware in Care kit.

So, when Marty heard about the National Parkinson Foundation's *Aware in Care* campaign, which aims to help people with Parkinson's get the best care possible during a hospital stay, his first reaction was "sign me up!" He immediately ordered an *Aware in Care* kit.

These proactive instincts came in handy. Before Marty's last visit to the hospital he reached for his *Aware in Care* kit just minutes after dialing 9-1-1. As soon as the paramedics arrived, he presented them with one of his *I Have Parkinson's* reminder slips, a checkbook-like item in the kit which has 50 tear-off sheets that state "I have Parkinson's and I must get my medication on time—every time." Upon his arrival in the emergency room, his slip was then given to the triage nurse who immediately reviewed key information about caring for people with PD.

"Because of the slip, the nurse immediately contacted my personal physician," Marty said. "And as a result I didn't have any trouble getting my medications on time while in the emergency room."

Along with the reminder slips Marty explained that another item included in the kit, the *Aware in Care Hospital Action Plan* (a booklet designed to help people with Parkinson's prepare for a hospital stay) was essential to his visit.



"The parts of the booklet that discuss that you should be vocal, persistent and assume that each person you meet has little experience with Parkinson's are so true," Marty said.

Using these tools, Marty was better prepared to speak with the nurse manager and the head pharmacist after moving from the emergency room to the hospital's main care unit. "After going through everything with them they got the schedule timed perfectly, and for the first time I got my medications on time and every time I was supposed to," he said.



By educating himself, Marty was also able to share critical information with hospital staff about Parkinson's and his particular requirements. His positive experience reflects the main intent of the *Aware in Care* campaign—to empower patients and help healthcare professionals understand Parkinson's better.

"Having the *Aware in Care* kit has made a world of difference in the treatment I received when I had to go to the hospital," Marty said. "Everyone with Parkinson's should have one."

Watch the online video of Marty talking about how he used the *Aware in Care* kit in the hospital. Visit NPF's Video Library, www.parkinson.org/videos.

For more information about the Aware in Care campaign or to share your thoughts about the kit online, please visit www.awareincare.org.