

5

PRESCRIPTIONS YOU WON'T FIND IN YOUR DOCTOR'S BAG

Vol. 02



Your Medical History Use Your Power!

Myrtle Potter

Your Trusted Voice in Healthcare™

Published by Myrtle Potter Media, Inc. eBooks

Table *of* CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION Page 1

Prescription 1: Know That Your Medical Records Are Your Medical Records Page 2

Prescription 2: Know That Your Medical Records Are Your Medical Records Page 3

Prescription 3: Be Your Own Life Archivist Page 5

Prescription 4: Use The Power of Your Family's Past Page 6

Prescription 5: Use it, Don't Lose it! Page 7

- *Final thoughts* Page 8
- *About Myrtle* Page 9
- *Copyright* Page 10
- *About the publisher* Page 10



Introduction


5 Prescriptions You Won't Find in Your Doctor's Bag: Your Medical History - Use Your Power!

Have you ever been flipping through a family photo album and been able to piece together your looks from across the generations? Your eyes look like Grandma Jean; your nose looks exactly like your dad's. But where the heck did you get your unruly hair? Upon a little investigation you find out your great Aunt Agnes was known for her spirited tresses. It is easy to see where you have inherited your looks, but it is harder to know something much more important that runs in your family - your inherited biological make-up.

In this age of molecular medicine what a family knows about itself is a powerful, and even life-saving tool. With the advancements in understanding genetics and full genome sequencing a family can now acquire important and lifesaving information about potentially inherited conditions.

But, it begins with you. It is important that you know as much as you can about your medical history as well as what is found in your own personal medical records.

In this eBook I am going to take the mystery out of your medical files, how you can get copies of them and why you should. Plus, we are going to get to the roots of your family medical history tree. With these two tools in hand you will have some of the best information to get yourself the best possible healthcare. It may even save your life! Let's get to it.



*In this age of molecular medicine
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powerful and even lifesaving tool.*

Prescription 1

Know that Your Medical Records, Are *Your* Medical Records

Is this a familiar scene? You're sitting in the doctor's exam room. She scribbles a bunch of notes then shoves this sheet into a beat-up manila folder. This folder then disappears into the recesses of your doctor's office. It all seems so mysterious -- what was written, what else is in that file, who else gets to see it and why can't I? What your doctor has just written is added to your medical records and not only do you have every right to see what is in your file, it is your *job* to know what is in your medical files.

With the growing number of people entering the healthcare system a lot is changing. Perhaps, one of the biggest changes is that more of the burden of taking charge of your care and being a knowledgeable, responsible consumer is being shifted squarely on to your shoulders. It's a fact of life; let's not complain about this new responsibility because it can be a good thing, a really good thing.



So that old manila file may look like a non-descript mishmash of notes, but it is actually one of the most important files compiled about you. These are your medical records. Your medical records are important because they provide the history of your health status, and they are the record your doctor uses to make decisions regarding your healthcare.

The most important part of the medical record is the physician's narrative notes. These notes document the rationale for why a selected course of treatment is appropriate. They are generally made after each patient encounter. Narrative notes also provide a useful summary, and the implications of the other information contained in a medical record, such as the results of labs, imaging and other diagnostic tests.

The patient of the new millennium understands that monitoring our medical records is a *right*, we have and a *responsibility* too.

Prescription 2

Get Copies of Your Medical Records the *Right Way*

Most likely, your medical records have been sent from doctor to doctor, but you have never requested your medical records for yourself, because you weren't sure if you could and how to ask. Perhaps, you've even been told by a misinformed office receptionist that you cannot have your medical records. But you know better. *Your* records are *your* records. Here's how you can acquire your medical records:

- » Get a list of all medical providers from whom you would like records.
- » Most often you will need to request your medical records in writing. Some doctors' offices have a simple form that you can fill out. If there is no form you will need to write a letter to request your records. A good request includes the following information: your name (include maiden name if applicable), address, medical identifier or other identifier, i.e. date of birth or social security number, the records you want to acquire, and the range of dates for which you are requesting, and the date you want to come by to pick them up (or the date which you want them emailed or shipped to you) and the form you would like them in (paper copies, scanned and emailed, loaded on a flash drive). With the advancement of technology, getting electronic copies of medical records will become more commonplace.
- » If you are requesting records for a child, or someone for whom you are a legal guardian you will need to supply his or her information as well. If you are getting records for another adult, perhaps an elderly relative, that person will need to give the doctor written permission to release records to you.
- » There may be a cost associated with attaining these records. Usually it is the cost of the time it takes to copy and prepare the records. You can get an estimate in advance from your doctor's office.
- » When your doctor tells you the results of your lab work, ask for a copy of the report while you're in the office. Often they are happy to give you a copy at no cost.
- » Most states have legislation that requires your doctor's office to supply you with your medical records within 30 days of your request. Most likely it will take a week or two. It is important to make your request well in advance of your need. If it is an emergency you should request and get same day service.
- » Doctors will normally share records between offices as a courtesy at no cost.
- » You might be denied your medical records if the doctor thinks attaining these records could be harmful to your health. Most of these cases are mental health related, where the doctor has deemed you might cause yourself bodily harm. If you are denied you can always file an appeal.



Prescription 2

Get Copies of Your Medical Records the *Right Way*

Note on Privacy:

Medical records are among the most sensitive of our sensitive personal information. A federal law called *The Privacy Rule*, which is part of HIPAA (the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act) gives you rights over your health information and sets rules and limits on who can look at and receive your health information. *The Privacy Rule* applies to all forms of individuals' protected health information, whether electronic, written, or oral. Still, patients are often surprised to learn just who is allowed by law to access their records. Any payor, including health insurance companies, HMOs, and employer group health plans may access a patient's records. Also included are government entities that pay for healthcare such as Medicare and Medicaid.

This is yet another good reason for you to know exactly what is being shared about you.

If you believe your rights are being denied or your health information isn't being protected you can:

- » File a complaint with your provider or health insurer
- » File a complaint with the US Government through the Office of Civil Rights or OCR.

If you want the entire picture on The Privacy Rule you can go to:

<http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/privacy/hipaa/understanding/summary/>



The Privacy Rule applies to all forms of individuals' protected health information, whether electronic, written, or oral.

Prescription 3

Be Your Own Life Archivist

OK, now that you have all of these important medical records what should you do?

- » **Check for accuracy:** Firstly, you should read your records. This is not just for your own education but you should be looking for errors as well. Yes, doctors do make recording errors. Imagine omitting the word “not” in the phrase “The tumor was not cancerous.” Now the record would read very differently - “The tumor was cancerous”. Not only does this share incorrect information with other doctors but it can have an adverse affect on future insurance policies, especially if you are applying for life insurance. If you find what you believe is an error in your records, it is within your rights to insist on a correction or addition. I always suggest making this request in writing.
- » **Get organized:** You need to organize your records so they are all in one place and easily accessible. In today’s world I would suggest you scan all of your documents and save them in your computer. Then have both a hard copy print out and a flash drive of your records to share with your doctors. A three ring binder with room to expand is a great way to keep your hard copy records easily accessible.
- » **Add current information:** Have a list of all of the current medications you are taking, including over the counter drugs, vitamins or herbs. Also note any allergies.
- » **Add emergency Information:** Be sure you also have current emergency contacts listed along with your insurance information and doctors that are on your team.
- » **Add family history:** I talked about this at the beginning of this eBook. The medical picture of your family’s past can have profound effect on your present and your future, so much so that I am devoting an entire prescription to its importance.



Prescription 4

Use The Power of Your Family's Past

When you are in the doctor's office and they hand you a form to fill out about your family medical history do you do a lot of guessing? Or do you just skip over a lot of questions because it just doesn't seem that important? Well, think again, your family medical history is one of the most important tools both you and your doctor can have.



According to the American Society of Human Genetics (ASHG), best tool for assessing what diseases you might be at risk for is your family medical history. When you think about it, almost all diseases are inherited, it doesn't guarantee a condition will be passed along but it does give your doctor the information he or she needs to look for patterns, assess risks and perhaps do some great preventative medicine.

So let's get digging into this family medical history tree.

Doctors recommend you collect family medical history as far back as you can but do your best to get at least three generations, that means; grandparents, parents, aunts and uncles, yourself, spouse, siblings, cousins, nieces and nephews and be sure you record both your mother's and father's sides of the family. To help you gather the most useful information from your family, focus on collecting the following:

Family Names: both married and maiden names for female relatives

Age: current or age at death

Relation: note full or half-siblings, twins, adoptions

Ancestry: by country, ethnicity – some genetic conditions require specific tests for certain ethnic groups

Death: cause of death and if autopsy was performed

Illnesses: including birth defects, mental illness, diabetes, basically any condition of significance

Lifestyle: history of tobacco, alcohol, or drug use; obesity; occupation

If there is something you don't know leave it blank, as guessing could send your healthcare provider down the wrong path.

Making a medical family tree can do more than merely alert family members to future problems, it can also be a catalyst for change.

For more help documenting your family's health history, you can explore the following resources:

NIHSeniorHealth provides tools for documenting family health history.

MedlinePlus provides information about family history.

The US Department of Health and Human Services You will find the Surgeon General's Family Health History Initiative and a web tool to help you create a family tree.

Prescription 5

Use it, Don't Lose It!



Do you feel more empowered? You should. If you have acquired your medical records and created a great family medical history - you have some really powerful tools to help manage your health. But now you need to use them. The next time you visit your primary care physician review your medical history and your family history. With this simple action you will have given your doctor the tools to; improve prevention of certain conditions, assess certain risks, and make better choices. Now that's a prescription for a healthier future!



If you have acquired your medical records and created a great family medical history - you have some really powerful tools to help manage your health.



Final Thought

At some point in life, we will all journey into the healthcare system. Whether it is seeking care for yourself or a loved one, it is one of those life passages that involves lots of people, has many moving parts, moments of frustration, and hopefully great joy and success. Perhaps the old adage ‘knowledge is power’ applies to your healthcare voyage more than any other situation in life. So, be wise, be prepared, and remember to pack ***5 Prescriptions You Won’t Find in Your Doctor’s Bag - Use Your Power!***

Dear Readers,

Thank you so much for reading ***5 Prescriptions You Won’t Find in Your Doctor’s Bag: Your Medical History - Use Your Power!*** This eBook was born from my own personal experience of being engulfed in a healthcare situation that turned my world upside-down. After I regained my health, I made a promise to myself to “use my hard-earned knowledge to help others in disruptive healthcare situations”.

And that is why I have made this eBook so easy to share. Whether you are seeking care for yourself or a loved one, finding support is just a click away. Just go to my website www.MyrtlePotter.com and click on the eBook cover. It’s that simple.

I also hope while at my website, you will find lots of other useful tools and information to help you successfully navigate the healthcare system. You’ll find a whole team of people who want to help you through just about any healthcare situation. There are videos, podcasts, lots of useful articles and resources.

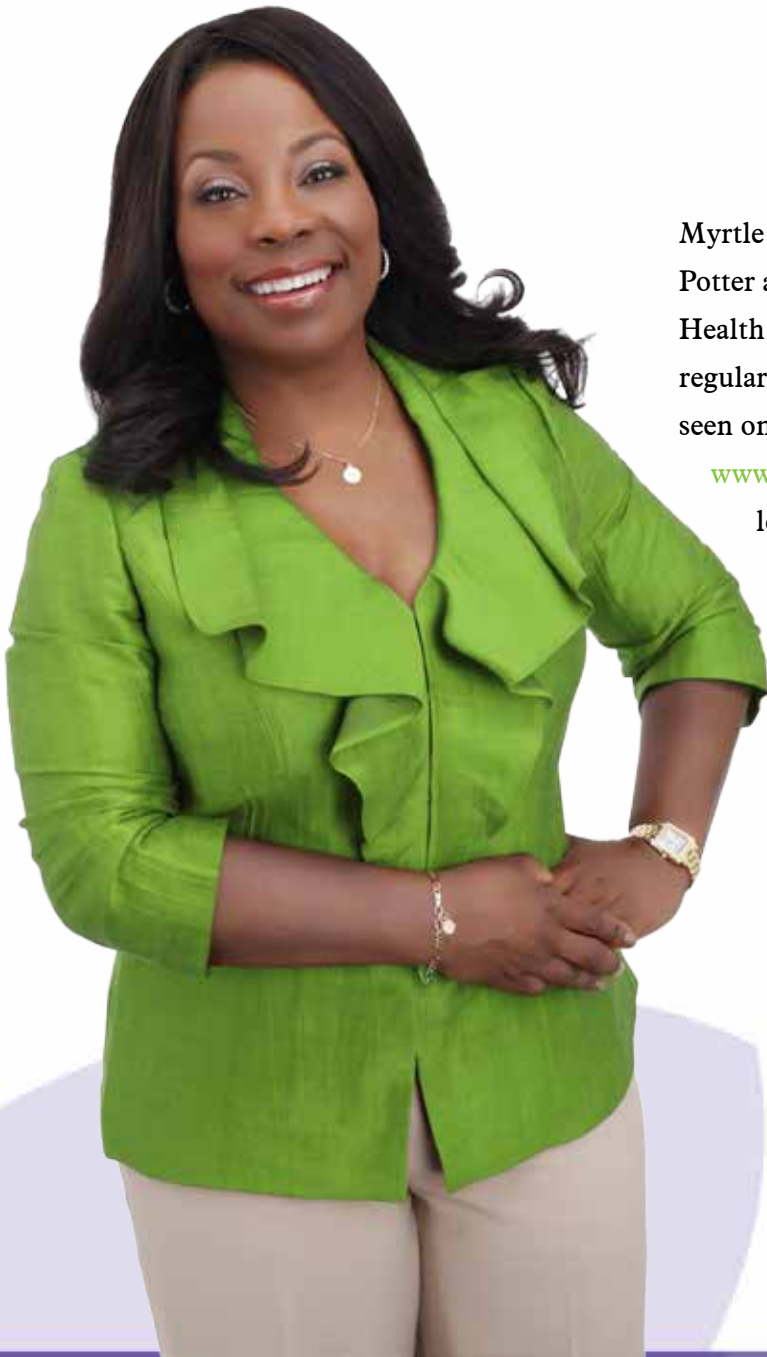
Most importantly, we want to hear from you – how you’re doing and what we can do to help. So please keep in touch. I want to be your trusted guide as you navigate the healthcare system.

Best Wishes for the Best Health,

Myrtle

Please visit me at www.MyrtlePotter.com





About Myrtle

Myrtle Potter is CEO of Myrtle Potter Media, Inc. and Myrtle Potter and Company, LLC. She is on the boards of Medco Health Solutions, Inc., and Everyday Health Inc., and is a regular on-air business contributor on CNBC. She can also be seen on Accent Health and on the Everyday Health website at www.everydayhealth.com. Myrtle previously held high-level positions at Genentech, Bristol-Myers Squibb and Merck, and served on the board of Amazon.com. She was three times named one of the “Top 50 Most Powerful Women in Business” by *Fortune magazine*, Myrtle is widely recognized as *Your Trusted Voice in Healthcare™*.

www.MyrtlePotter.com

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About the Publisher

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