

Tips for Patient Visiting
Volunteer Services
University of Iowa Hospitals & Clinics

Thank you for becoming a UIHC volunteer and sharing your time to assist our patients, visitors, and staff. The health care environment can be intimidating, so we have compiled a list of suggestions to help you succeed with patient and visitor contacts. Our best advice? Be your most outgoing self when you are here.

Wild Rose Gifts (WRG)

A visit to WRG can be a nice diversion for patients and/or families. Located in the main lobby, WRG gifts offers a variety of items, including jewelry, handbags, clothing, UIHC and Hawkeye merchandise, balloons, flowers, cards, stationary, toiletries, candy, magazines, and books.

Kaleidoscope Gift Shop and Safety Store

Located in the main lobby of SFCH, Kaleidoscope is designed for kids, and those who care for them! The shop offers whimsical and educational products specifically selected for children and families. Traditional safety equipment such as helmets, safety seats, and medical alert bracelets can also be found here.

Patients' Library (8016 JCP, Monday – Saturday, 1:00pm – 4:00pm)

Janice and Bruce Ellig Children's Library (First Floor SFCH, Monday – Friday, 9:00am – 12:00pm and Sunday 1:00pm – 4:00pm)

Anyone is able to check out books, magazines, iPads, laptops, computers, music, movies, DVD players, video game consoles with games, and even craft kits, from our libraries! A number of printed and online resources are available regarding treatment and recovery for specific health conditions. The Patients Library also offers business and communication services such as scanning to email, faxing, photocopying, and printing. In the Children's Library, Story Hour is held every Wednesday at 10:30am, and offers fun for kids of all ages in a specifically designed gaming area.

Volunteer – Patient Interactions

Key Words at Key Times – How YOU can affect patient satisfaction

Always carry a copy of the Welcome booklet. This booklet lists FAQs, as well as the hours and locations of all eating establishments, parking information, etc...

Begin every interaction by giving our patients ANODAT (Acknowledge/Greet, Name, Occupation, Duty/Task, Thanks), e.g. "Hi, my name is _____. I am a volunteer here in the hospital and I'm here to _____. Is there anything else I can do for you? I have the time. Thanks!" **Every patient, every time.** When rounding from room to room, always knock before entering and wait for response, give patient the ANODAT, then:

"Is your call light within reach?"

"Is your phone within reach?"

"Are your tissues close by?"

"Is your bedside table where you would like it?"

"Is there anything else I can do for you today? I have the time."

Opening statements and questions useful on your first encounter with a new patient:

- Be sure to introduce yourself and state that you are a volunteer with the hospital (always wear your hospital ID badge when volunteering), e.g. "Hi, my name is _____. I am a volunteer here in the hospital and I was wondering if there is anything I could help you with"...or "I'm volunteering here today and would like to chat with you for a while and/or get you anything you might need."
- Ask them how they are doing/how things are going today.
- Ask them if there is anything you can get them from gift shop, newspapers, stamps, puzzles, books, etc (be sure to check with a nurse before giving any food or beverages – even water!).
- Offer to read to them – books, newspaper, the Bible, etc. (Patients' Library Info)
- Offer to do crafty things with them – draw, watercolor, knit, etc.
- Offer to entertain visiting children – bring materials from the Patients' Library.
- Talk about the weather, sports, current news events, etc.
- Check your unit binder to see if anything has been written about a particular patient, this can be an excellent opening for you.

Helpful questions in creating conversations:

- Be observant when entering the room – often times you will be able to pick up on a patient's interests.
- Most patients enjoy talking about their lives – jobs, families, pets, etc.
- Ask where they are from – you will be surprised at how small the world really is.
- If there are pictures in the room, ask about the people/animals in the pictures.
- Comment on any flowers or balloons in the room.
- Ask about their employment or if the patient happens to be retired, where they used to work.
- Ask them about their past travels – you may have some common travel experiences.
- If dealing with **children** – ask what grade they are in, what their favorite subjects are, what they like to do, about their friends, what their favorite TV show is, etc.
- Don't be afraid to talk about yourself some, too, if patients seem interested and ask. Nothing too personal, but patients may enjoy hearing about what year you are in school, what your major is, where you are from, etc.
- Again talk about the weather! This is always safe.

Other suggestions:

- Relax! Enjoy yourself and have a good time – your patients will pick up on your enthusiasm.
- **Smile** and be polite – friendly first impressions go a long way.
- Be sure to speak up, speak clearly and speak slowly.
- Eye contact is important whenever communicating.
- Be an active listener – reciprocate questions when appropriate and **sit at eye level**.
- Many patients enjoy visitors, but if not, don't take it personally.
- Nurses and clerks are also a good source for information on patients – don't be afraid to ask them who might enjoy a visit or if there are any special topics of interest to a patient.
- You may offer your hand but don't insist – watch for cues. A warm, gentle handshake at the start or close of a visit can be reassuring. Most cultures are comfortable with this gesture, but further comfort gestures (hugs, for example) are not appropriate to initiate. Be sure to practice hand hygiene before and after patient contact.

Questions, concerns, or suggestions?

Call the Volunteer Services Office at 319-356-2515 (Monday – Friday, 8:00am – 5:00pm).