

[Safer Medical Care for You and Yours](#)
[Six Tools for Safe, Effective Compassionate Care](#)

By T Michael White MD

With commentary by geriatric specialist

Stephen F Hightower MD

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

An efficient and effective way to “get a feel for” a complex message is to consider the answers to frequently asked questions (FAQs). My answers to some FAQs about *Safer Medical Care for You and Yours— Six Tools for Safe, Effective Compassionate Care* follow.

Dr. Mike White

Q: So, what’s in it for you?

A: If I were to have the honor to sit across from you at your kitchen table, I would convey an important message for you and for those near and dear to you. The Center for Disease Control estimates there will be over 160 million visits to emergency rooms in 2016. If you also include those who visit an urgent care setting, one out of three of us will seek care in an emergency department or in urgent care in the next year. Although these are excellent institutions, it is very likely they will not have a copy of your medical records, especially if you are visiting from out of town. Without your organized and accurate medical record at your fingertips you will be in a compromised, unsafe position if you should be seriously injured or become significantly ill and lose the capacity to think and speak clearly. I am committed to help you stay safe.

Q: A more complete physician?

A: As I have matured as a physician and in life, and as I have begun to address the care of my family (for example, for my well-past-90 mother living large in Florida) and grudgingly confront my own infirmities, I have become a more complete physician. Through training and experience, I have come to understand that we, you and I, are not prepared to enable the fine ‘Better Angels’ that assemble to care for us to provide us with safe, effective compassionate care.

Q: Involved in, informed about and responsible for our healthcare?

A: We, you and I, are not as involved in, informed about and responsible for our healthcare as we should be — as we must be. What does “involved in, informed about and responsible” for our healthcare look like? It requires that we:

- Craft our organized and accurate uniquely personal medical record and keep it at our fingertips — a major issue;
- Thoughtfully identify and appoint our HealthCare Power of Attorney — a major issue;
- Get in touch with our very personal healthcare values desires and wishes — our wishes for our control of the end of our lives — a major issues;
- Commit our very personal healthcare values desires and wishes to the written page and share them with our HealthCare Power of Attorney — a “major” major issue;
- Learn how to efficiently and effectively convey our medical concerns to our healthcare team;
- Be prepared, from time to time if/when necessary, to seek the assistance of an advocate who understands how healthcare works and who is invested in our well-being and
- Keep a prominently displayed emergency alert card on our person with the contact information for our HealthCare Power of Attorney(s) — a major issue.

Q: How will this investment of time and energy, help you and yours?

A: The benefits are many:

- You will become a much more involved, informed and responsible patient;
- Information is power. Your fine healthcare teams (‘Better Angels’) will be powerfully dealing with powerful information about you;
- Your care will be more efficient making precious time available for thinking about and caring for you;
- Errors (for example, medications or allergies) will be avoided;
- Expenses (for example, appointments, tests, co-pays and deductibles) will be diminished;
- Your care will feel much more personal and compassionate;
- Your unique and very personal wishes will be honored;
- The ‘Better Angels’ assembled to care for you will love you for it; and
- Your significant others who may become responsible for guiding your care will love you for it.

Q: *Safer Medical Care for You and Yours — Six Tools for Safe, Effective Compassionate Care?*

A: This book provides the six tools you need to be involved in, informed about and responsible for your healthcare. As a more complete physician, I provide the tools that readily demonstrate how I do it (instead of just hectoring you to accomplish something impossibly complex). Please understand and then use the six gift tools provided to enable the ‘Better Angels’ assembled to care for you to provide you with safe, effective compassionate care. Please start today.

Q: Where might you best start?

A: Please start by reviewing and understanding *My (Unique and Very) Personal Medical Record — a gift example*. Then emulate it to create your own document (and/or a document for someone near and dear to you) and keep it at your fingertips.

Q: If you invest the time and energy to create *My (Unique and Very) Personal Medical Record* and have it at your fingertips, will you be in a better place?

A: Let me count the ways:

1. You will immediately, in a new way, be involved in, informed about and responsible for your healthcare (for example, you will know your medications and the reasons you are taking them).
2. You will be prepared to efficiently and effectively convey your organized, accurate, legible and up-to date healthcare story to the fine healthcare 'Better Angels' assembled to care for you.
3. Your fine healthcare team will efficiently and effectively comprehend your story. You will, to your advantage, convert their work from inefficient data collection to the invaluable work of thinking about (i.e., diagnosing and treating) you.
4. With your story efficiently and effectively conveyed and comprehended, you have positioned yourself to enable and receive safer, effective compassionate care.
5. With your story efficiently and effectively conveyed and comprehended, you will position your fine healthcare 'Better Angels' to accomplish their important, meaningful work and they will love you for it.

Q: Don't your wonderful care givers (your 'Better Angels') already have this information?

A: In this day and age, it is unlikely that your fine healthcare team will have efficient access to your organized and accurate medical information.

Q: Doesn't my fine personal physician already have *My (Unique and Very) Personal Medical Record* in order?

A: Perhaps. However, in this day and age, it is wise for you to be prepared for an intricate and vulnerable time when your personal physician will not be involved in your care (for example, while traveling or when referred to a specialist at a major medical center).

Q: Let me ask this same question in a different way. Isn't this information already in my record?

A: There are several "ifs" here:

1. If you have a meticulous, long-term personal physician and if he/she is the only physician who cares for you, the information may be in your record and/or in her/his consciousness;
2. If you have a meticulous, long-term personal physician and see several consultants, your personal physician's record is very likely incomplete and inaccurate;
3. Even if you have a meticulous, long-term personal physician who has your record in perfect order, it is increasingly unlikely that he/she will care for your next acute event. It is more likely you will be cared for by urgent care or emergency medicine staff, by a covering physician, by a hospitalist and/or by a consulted specialist who do not have access to your records and
4. Regrettably, if you were discharged from the hospital just yesterday and re-admitted today to the very same hospital, it is unlikely that your healthcare information in your electronic medical record would be organized, accurate and ready to maximally position you to receive safe, timely, efficient, effective, equitable (fair/just) patient-centered medical care.

Q: OK then, let me, again, ask this same question in a different way. Don't my healthcare 'Better Angels' assemble this information when I present to the office, urgent care, the emergency department or to the hospital for admission? Isn't that part of standard operating procedure?

A: You may rest assured that the 'Better Angels' caring for you will, in every circumstance, do their professional very best; however:

1. The more organized you are, the more organized, efficient, effective and accurate they will be,
2. Caution: you may be in no condition (may not have the capacity) to cooperate with their complex queries and
3. Caution: it will generally take your dedicated and talented team more than an hour to get this right and they often have only minutes — placing your care on the slippery slope just when you most need safe, timely, efficient, effective, equitable (fair/just), medical care.

Q: When I get into this, should I be extremely compulsive about this? Is more, more?

A: Yes and no:

1. Be really compulsive about accuracy (for example, allergies and the names and dosages of your medications) and at the same time
2. Keep your *My (Unique and Very) Personal Medical Record* to two pages or you will lose your audience — the fine healthcare 'Better Angels' assembled to care

for you. For your healthcare team, one organized and accurate sheet (front and back) is best — as is so often the case, less is more.

Q: What are users saying about this process?

A: Feedback to date:

1. Patients and families/significant-others say they are much more involved in, informed about and responsible for enabling and receiving safe, effective, compassionate care.
2. Nurses, pharmacists, physicians and staff report finding the two-page *My (Unique and Very) Personal Medical Record* document “incredibly useful” — especially at first visits, when circumstances become confused and/or after major interventions.
3. Patients and physicians say that the process has helped them identify and address some important neglected healthcare opportunities (for example, catching up on cancer detection, updating immunizations and/or identifying medication duplications or incompatibilities).
4. Patients, families/significant-others, physicians and support staff report enhanced communications.
5. Families/significant-others report they find it helpful/necessary to assist less computer (word processing) savvy family members/friends with document preparation.
6. Patients, nurses, pharmacists, physicians, staff and families/significant-others have recommended this process to their own family and friends.
7. All observe that although this is not rocket science, it is just as important as rocket science as it favorably impacts clinical, quality, safety, satisfaction and financial aspects of healthcare.

Q: **If this works out for me and mine, how may I repay the favor?**

A: Thanks for asking,

1. If you were to create and implement your own *My (Unique and Very) Personal Medical Record* that will be reward enough for me.
2. I would be ecstatic if you were to advance my mission by passing the concept, *My (Unique and Very) Personal Medical Record*, forward to those near and dear to you.
3. *Safer Medical Care for You and Yours* is a continuous quality improvement process. It will assist my work greatly if you were to communicate via drmikewhite@tmichaelwhitemd.com that which I have right (and why), that which I have wrong (and why) and that which I have missed/omitted.

Again, thanks for asking.

Q: What if I have done my best and still have a question or two?

A: This is important. I will be pleased to do my best to answer an email question or two regarding the process of creating your documents — it is what I do. I may best be contacted at drmikewhite@tmichaelwhitemd.com.

Respectfully submitted,
Dr. Mike White

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