

Empowered Patient = Empowered Care

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**This is a GPS for empowered patients and care partners,
helping you to better navigate our fragmented healthcare landscape.**

Several years ago, I was at a Vancouver Stanley Park TEDx Talk where I heard Claire Snyman speak about her sudden plunge into BC's healthcare system and the serious medical errors that took place. I reached out to her after that event and since then our paths keep on crossing and our work keeps running in parallel.

Her perspective as a young, healthy woman who became suddenly, critically ill, is a worthy read. I have attached the link to her compelling TEDx Talk, below.

Become engaged in our health and health care using a T.E.A.M. Approach®

by Claire Snyman



"As an individual who was diagnosed with a brain tumour, I had to quickly figure out how to navigate the system and become my body's own advocate. But, it was not a skill I already had – I had to learn it myself! Learning this skill also helped me to partner with my medical team for my own benefit as a patient."

***With aging populations and increases in chronic disease, it's
unfortunately just a matter of time before most of us or a loved one will
be a patient in the health care system.***

Often when we enter the health care system, we (or a loved one) may have received a diagnosis, leaving us with feelings of uncertainty and tons of questions. This can be challenging and navigating the health care system can leave us feeling confused,

overwhelmed and powerless. There is something humbling about being in the care of someone else when you are at your most vulnerable. Even those who are strong and confident can be rendered uncertain and powerless.

Managing our health and health care can be challenging at the best of times. We have to navigate the health care system, multiple specialists, appointments, medications and our health condition. It can feel like a full-time job. Throw a pandemic into the mix and the whole landscape changes for us as patients as well as for our health care teams.

So, what can we do to be ready to navigate the waters of the health care system with confidence and certainty?

Become engaged in our health and health care using a [T.E.A.M Approach®](#)

TRACK - We already track so many parts of our lives. How can we apply this to our health and health care? A great area to start with is keeping records of everything important about our health. This is the story of our body. It helps create a 'medical profile' of sorts. Keep records of everything important about your health e.g. medical history, symptoms, medications, health records and copies of test results.

EDUCATE - Being informed and educated but not overwhelmed is a key way to become more confident in managing our health. Information helps us make informed decisions with our health care team. Try to access information in an understandable and reliable format to help you make informed decisions.

ASK - When we ask questions about our health and health care, we open up communication between ourselves and our health care team. But asking questions is not an easy thing to do! A good place to start is with questions such as: Why, what if and how can we do this together?

MANAGE - As individuals, patients and caregivers, finding ways to be engaged in our health and health care and partner with our health care team can help us manage our health.

Partner with and build your medical team:

Connection - Ensuring we are connected with the right health care partner is crucial to ensuring our needs are met from the get-go. By asking around, you will quickly find through either word of mouth or from your own health care providers, that a referral system exists to help you connect with the health care partner you need.

Communication - Once you have found that Connection, the next step is to ensure effective Communication. You may think this should be obvious but sometimes I have walked out of my appointments thinking, "I didn't get my words across properly" or "I am not sure they understood what I was saying". Ever felt that way? Well, that's where Communication comes in. Writing down exactly what you want to achieve, your "needs" and "objectives" before the appointment with your Connection, can help ensure clear Communication during the time spent together. Clear Communication, both ways, can result in a better outcome for us, the patients.

Collaboration - Now that you and your Connection have Communicated clearly over what your needs and objectives are, it is time for Collaboration. This really is just working with another person or group to achieve or do something. That is exactly what a relationship with our health care partner should be – working together in order to achieve a better patient outcome right?

The next time you or a loved one enter the healthcare system, try out some of these ideas and see it as an opportunity for a better outcome for you as a patient. See it as a chance to stand up for your body, be your own advocate so that you can participate in your healing journey together with your healthcare partner.

Watch Claire's Stanley Park TEDx Talk: How to Save Your Life in a Complex Health Care System

[Claire Snyman](#) is an author, blogger and advocate for patient and healthcare collaboration with lived experience from the brain tumour community. She has a passion for inspiring people to put their health in their own hands.