

Trouble Getting Help

Category: Hospitalized

written by Pris Campbell | July 1, 2025

A few years ago, I lost my balance and ended up on the floor with what turned out to be a broken shoulder, multiple bruises, and a semi-concussion. Because my white blood cell count was elevated, the admitting doctor kept me in the hospital for four days on a saline IV, since an attempt to put me on an antibiotic gave me hives. I'd consistently had bad reactions to other antibiotics in the past, so he relied only on the saline to clear my system.

I was in bad pain, since pain medicine makes me throw up or gives me other debilitating symptoms. So I managed through those four days with Tylenol, cool packs, and my arm in a sling. The orthopedist sent by the admitting doctor after my scans were done felt the break would bond on its own if it was kept stable. I was terrified.

I told the dietary staff what foods triggered my interstitial cystitis, which limited me to the same menu for every lunch and dinner: baked chicken and a vegetable. The staffer who brought my first meal set the dishes, uncovered, on a table out of my reach. Just to move was excruciating. I rang for the nurse, but no one came until after my food had been taken away—which resulted in a chiding from dietary for not eating. The nurse told me that the staff didn't have time to get my food ready and help me eat.

I also had multiple urges to urinate, and help never came. One aide told me just to wet the bed, that a urine cover was under the sheets. But no one checked on me in-between.

The doctor sent an orthopedist, then I saw him once more for about five minutes. It was like being in Danté's circle of hell.

Fortunately, a friend of my husband's had asked if my husband would hire his daughter for two months as a helper in his AC business. She had been a nurse but was changing fields. She knew me, and my husband said he would pay her the same fee she got helping him if she stayed with me through supper. Thank goodness. I had my meals cut up and served by her, a bed pan stuck under me when I was ready for one, a toothbrush readied for my use, and a real sponge bath (what the aides did was barely a face wash). The bed-wetting became just a nighttime thing. I only saw the nurse at medication time—she woke me up to give me my sleep meds, even though I have chronic fatigue syndrome so need my sleep.

Hospitals should do better by their patients. The two times my mother was in the hospital in her eighties, my husband and I hired a private aide to be with her. It was either that or not eat and pee in the bed for her, too.

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