

Slater Baptist Church

Pre-Surgery Visits

This document is presented as a means of thinking through the various aspects of a pre-surgery visit. The pastor is usually the person who makes pre-surgery visits and no two people will make those visits the same way. You may be asked to make such a visit and reading this document might be helpful before making that visit.

Procedures vary from hospital to hospital and clinic to clinic. The order may be different or some steps (paragraphs) may be combined. The detailed example below is given as a sample. The six paragraphs dealing with different stages of the procedure contain useful information. If you are not sure what the procedure is for any given institution (hospital or clinic), be sure to ask the person at the registration desk to explain it for you.

Preliminary Information

It is essential to obtain as much information as possible before attempting to make a pre-surgery visit. In case of emergencies there might be fragmented information (just the town where the surgery is to take place) or even erroneous information (the wrong hospital or the wrong name for the correct hospital). The name of the hospital may not even be known in some cases. In times of extreme emotion, details may get confused or omitted and what a person hears may be misinterpreted or misunderstood so what that person heard may not be accurately transmitted to someone else. For the above reasons, it is also essential that the basic information (first and last name of the person to undergo surgery, the hospital and town where the surgery is to be performed, the date and time of the surgery, the surgeon's name) be verified before making the visit. When possible, it is best to obtain the basic information from the patient or family. If all of the basic information is not available before making the visit, you just have to go with what you have and attempt to fill in the blanks yourself.

At the Reception Desk

It is recommended that even if you have information about the person and the surgery, you go to the hospital's or clinic's registration desk and tell them who you are and why you are there ("I am Joe Smith from Slater Baptist Church and I am here to see Henry Aldrich who is scheduled to have bypass surgery at 10 o'clock this morning"). If your information is correct, you will be given any additional information you might need (where to go if the patient has already arrived). If your information is incorrect, the information will be corrected.

In the Waiting Room

When your schedule permits it or if you have been asked by the patient or family to meet them prior to the patient being admitted, you can arrange to meet them at the registration desk. If the patient has not yet arrived, you can remain in the waiting room until they come. The patient may be accompanied by family or by a friend. You can greet them and, if you do not know them, you can introduce yourself and tell them why you are there ("I am Joe Smith from Slater Baptist

Church where Henry is a member. Our pastor was not able to be here this morning and asked if I would come and read a passage of Scripture and pray with Henry before his surgery.”).

However, if your time is limited, you can arrange to arrive 30 to 45 minutes prior to the surgery. Introduce yourself to the person at the reception desk and tell them who you are, why you are there, and who you want to see. They will have you escorted to the patient’s pre-surgery room. By that time, most of the preliminaries will have been done and the patient will most likely be in a waiting mode.

At the Registration Desk

The first step for the patient is to be registered. The hospital or clinic representative will verify the patient’s identity and the procedure that is to be performed. Then the financial information will be explained and the patient will sign a series of documents. This part of the admissions process is private and, unless you are invited by the patient to remain, it is best to volunteer to go to the waiting room until the patient is admitted.

The Admitting Desk

Next, the patient is taken to the admitting desk where his or her chart will be created. The patient will identify himself or herself and be asked to sit down until a nurse calls his or her name.

The Surgery Prep Room

Usually, the patient and one family member are allowed to proceed to the surgery prep room. Others accompanying the patient should wait in the surgery prep waiting room. The patient is taken to a small room where he or she puts on a hospital gown. Medical staff will come and go as they carry out their specific tasks to prepare the patient for surgery (verify the patient’s identity and the procedure to be done, take the patient’s vitals, explain the procedure, etc.). After these procedures, it is possible for the patient or family member to ask a nurse to have the church representative come for a short time of Scripture reading and prayer. Unless the patient asks the church representative to remain until he or she is taken to the surgical block, it is advisable for the church representative to leave after the prayer. This allows the patient to spend quality time with family and/or close friends.

Conclusion

Since there are a variety of circumstances (hospital or clinic procedures, specific wishes of the patient, relationship of the church representative to the patient, etc.) involved in pre-surgery visits, the above comments are intended to simply share some ideas about those visits. It is important to consider the wishes of the patient and respect the hospital or clinic procedures. In addition, you are representing God and your local church. The medical staff as well as the patient, family, and friends will be aware of your words and actions. And, be alert for opportunities to minister to others (to family, to someone in the waiting room, to a member of the medical staff). Sometimes a pause to speak to someone or an offer to pray for someone can be a much needed encouragement.