

SENIOR SCAPE: Health care can be bad for your health

By Jim Abram

I have had quite a month.

I was getting all ready for my impending knee replacement surgery, leaving little time for anything other than essential preparations. I was scheduled for my operation at the hospital early in the morning on Tuesday, November 4. So, of course, on the weekend just prior to my surgery, our bathroom sprung a leak.

When we went to shut off the water, the shut-off valves leaked too. So much for our well-planned weekend activities. Taps, sink, shut-off valves, drain and hours of installation woes later, we had the leaks fixed. Ready to get back to work getting ready to go into the hospital for surgery!

No such luck.

The next odyssey we embarked on was finishing doing the laundry. I'm sure you guessed by now, the plumbing Gods shone upon us once again. Water all over the laundry room floor. The washing machine was leaking. No time to fix now as I was hours away from being admitted into the hospital for 4 to 5 days.

Well, here we go. I'm at the hospital for my 8 a.m. scheduled appointment and everything goes like clockwork. I am admitted on time, given an epidural freezing below the waist and within a few hours I have a new knee! No pain (yet) as I recover in post-op. Later that afternoon, I am moved to my room where I would remain until Friday, if everything goes as planned.

My good wife, Susan, who has waited patiently during my operation, post-op respite and ultimate move to my room, has been a pillar of strength through this whole ordeal. But, now she has to go home to a house without a washing machine. Not good news at any time, let alone when she has to deal with my medical situation.

Back to the story of my experiences at the hospital.

I was in tremendous pain for the first 24 hours after my surgery. I complained bitterly but my complaints fell on deaf ears. I'm just another needy patient they must have thought. Finally, I asked one of the nurses what pain killers I was on. Many people I had talked to had been given morphine drips or other various tablets to control pain. I was advised that painkillers were not on my chart so none were given!

I immediately asked to see the surgeon, the anesthetist and the blood work specialist who attended at surgery and all three confirmed they had prescribed painkillers. But, I didn't get any because this information didn't make it to my chart. I'm glad I got that fixed.

I then wondered why, out of the multitude of menu items offered, I was only allowed to have boiled chicken breast. It turns out that my chart indicated I was a Type 1 diabetic.

I am not a Type 1 diabetic. That not only cut out half of the menu, they tried to give me insulin which I have never needed.

My blood glucose levels were measured every couple of hours and were in the normal range, yet this fact was ignored. Chart fixed? Not yet. My chart also indicated I was allergic to soy beans so that cut out the other half of the menu. I couldn't even have a salad. I am not allergic to soy beans. So, once this error was fixed, I was given food choices.

This only took three days to resolve. At least I lost some weight.

It turns out that buying a new washing machine is not a simple task. Too many decisions to make on price, quality, function and retailer choices. Well, this chapter of the story ends with a new washing machine, a new dryer, a new laundry tub and taps and shut-off valves (yes, again I need to replace everything).

While we're at it, we decided to retile the floor, install a tile backsplash and paint the room. Time for a professional as this job is too big for me with only one leg to stand on.

So, my good friend Lee, who is a reliable contractor, and good friend I met at our Aurora Seniors' Centre, is in our laundry room as I write, working way on this project.

Lee is currently installing the new sub-floor and my knee hurts just listening to his drilling and sawing as this brings back vivid memories of my operation.

Well, that is this week's rant from me.

Thanks to Paul and Cherie for visiting me in the hospital. Thanks to all of you who phoned me to show your support and boost my spirits. Thanks to Lee for coming to help us on such short notice. See you soon at the Aurora Seniors' Centre.

No walking club or pickle ball for me for a while.

Jimmy's last word: Ask to read your medical chart at the beginning of a hospital stay or else smuggle in your own food.

For more information on the Aurora Seniors' Centre and all it has to offer, drop by 90 John West Way, visit the web site www.auroraseniors.ca, email auroraseniors@rogers.com or call 905-726-4767 between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. Monday to Friday.