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Investments & Financial Planning, Inc.

Book Review: *You the Smart Patient*

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An Insider's Handbook for Getting the Best Medical Treatment

Michael F. Roizen, MD and Mehmet C. Oz, MD, with the Joint Commission
(Free Press 2006)

Editor's Note: RightPath Investments maintains a library of classic publications addressing a variety of wealth management, financial planning and investment subjects. We also endeavor to stay abreast of recent publications. One of the features of this newsletter is to provide reviews of well-written books and articles that are provocative, may become classics in their own right and are well worth spending the time reading in full. If you would like assistance in finding a relevant publication to your needs, please contact us. We offer links for purchasing books featured in our reviews as a convenience to our readers; any proceeds received from related sales are donated to a literacy or financial education program.

Good financial planning takes into account obtaining the right health insurance. But having the resources to pay for medical care is one thing; knowing how to use them is something else altogether.

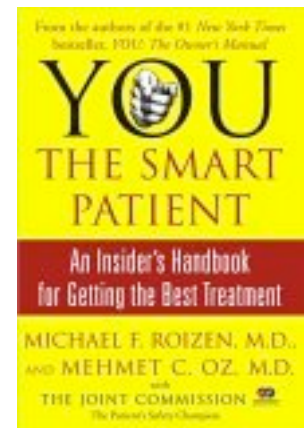
This book is a user's guide to the health care system. There are chapters on selecting a primary care doctor, choosing a surgeon and hospital in preparation for surgery and taking prescription drugs. There is a brief discussion on alternative medicine. The authors, who are practicing physicians, recommend *always* getting a second opinion.

The health care system is a complex and occasionally unforgiving apparatus. Becoming a participant in the process and an advocate on your own behalf dramatically increases your odds of a successful outcome. It may even save your life.

Take Charge by Communicating

Far from recommending that patients thoughtlessly follow doctor's orders, the authors suggest gaining as much knowledge about your situation as possible. The book is chock full of resources for conducting research. Each chapter has a set of recommended web sites. And don't worry that your doctor might think you are being a pest or a nag. The authors note that the best care goes to the "badger, not the mouse."

Good communication skills are the most critical quality a patient can bring to bear on a medical problem. "A Smart Patient describes medical problems straightforwardly in as much detail as possible." In fact, say the authors, "more than 80% of health problems can be diagnosed by the information the patient provides his or her doctor."



**You the Smart Patient:
An Insider's Handbook
for Getting the
Best Medical Treatment**

Checking Your Lists—Twice

Beyond advising to always get that second opinion, the authors provide comprehensive checklists to use in connection with just about any interface a patient could have with the medical system. That way, at each step of medical care, you understand how you can best interact.

Checking and checking again is a theme for Roizen and Oz. “Finding Dr. Right”, the chapter on how to find a good primary care doctor (PCD) is particularly good. They suggest that one of the key attributes that a Smart Patient looks for in a PCD is a physician who is well connected with the best specialists and can make a smart referral. You should get a board certified doctor—the American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS) recognizes twenty-four specialties—including internal medicine and pediatrics. Sleuthing around the local hospital and asking an ER nurse for a recommendation is a good way to get some names.

All of the advice in the book applies in spades when you’re facing surgery. In this case, the authors suggest talking to a local anesthesiologist to obtain some leads for finding the right surgeon. Identifying the best hospital for your surgery can be accomplished with the assistance of the book’s collaborator, the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Health Care Organizations, www.jointcommission.org, a standard setting organization for quality in health care.

The authors also wrote the #1 *New York Times* bestseller, *YOU: The Owner's Manual: An Insider's Guide to the Body that Will Make You Healthier and Younger* (Collins 2005).