



The risks of self-medication and respecting limits as volunteers

A guide for volunteers and caregivers





What is Self-Medication?

- **Taking medications, remedies, or treatments without medical supervision.**
- **Includes: over-the-counter medications, herbal or home remedies, or advice from non-medically trained individuals.**



Risks of Self-Medication

Health risks: incorrect dosage, dangerous interactions, worsening of the condition.

- **Delay in appropriate treatment: the patient may avoid consulting professionals.**
- **False sense of security: believing that a remedy solved the problem when it didn't.**



Role of Volunteers vs. Role of Health Professionals

Volunteers: offer companionship, emotional support, and light practical help.

Professionals: Doctors, nurses, and caregivers provide medical guidance and treatment.

Key boundary: “We are emotional support volunteers, not medical personnel”

Why refrain from suggesting home remedies or treatments?



- They could conflict with prescribed medication.
- They can cause harm if used incorrectly.
- They can generate distrust between families and health providers.
- Even with good intentions, it can be perceived as an invasion of boundaries.



Sensitivity and Respect

Many patients and families may believe in or use home remedies.

Volunteers should listen respectfully without endorsing or recommending.

A good phrase is: “That is something you can discuss with your doctor.”



Safe Alternatives for Volunteers

Provide emotional support: listen, be present.

**Provide comfort through non-medical means:
conversation, music, reading, light household help.**

**Encourage patients to consult their physician with
medical questions.**

Let us remember that...



Our role is to accompany patients and caregivers, not treat them.

Compassion and respect go further than advice.

Limits protect both the patient and the volunteer.

Brief Scenario



A patient complains of pain and a volunteer is tempted to suggest a home remedy.



References



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