

Warwick Beacon

Written by BEACON Tue, Nov 11 08

(View Link at http://warwickonline.com/warwickonline/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=39307&Itemid=33)

When our grandparents fall ill, when our neighbors have a bad fall and when our nieces go into labor, we send them to the hospital – what we think is a safe haven for the sick and injured. With its sparkling white surfaces and doctors donning fresh scrubs and medical masks, healthcare facilities appear to be the solution to medical emergencies, but there is a darker side to hospital care that is often overlooked.

Each year, nearly two million patients in the United States get an infection in the hospital, and the bacteria that cause these illnesses are becoming increasingly immune to antibiotics. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, more than 70 percent of these bacteria have become resistant to at least one of the drugs hospitals commonly use to treat them, which begs the question, if we're not safe in the hospital – where are we safe?

Despite the continued efforts of dedicated health care professionals to provide quality care to patients, hospitals and other health care facilities are breeding grounds for bacteria and without action on behalf of both the health care industry and the patient, the problem isn't looking to improve.

“It's not getting better – only worse,” said Gregory Gardner, who is courageously using his experiences to encourage patients and professionals to join forces and fight back against hospital-acquired infections.

Gardner's father, Warwick resident Jack Gardner, went into the hospital for what was supposed to be a short stay. Months later, Jack lost his fight against his infection and the Gardner family was blindsided by the nightmare that took their father from them. Now armed with an arsenal of information on hospital-acquired infections, he wants to raise awareness and let patients and their families know that with little effort, you could be preventing a potential disaster.

Gardner is one of thousands of people who have lost loved ones to hospital-acquired infections and an astonishing 271 people die every single day in the United States due to this epidemic. The number is overwhelming but the solutions are simple and we applaud Pat Mastors for turning her own horror story into a tool to empower patients. A box that holds just eight small items, her “Empowered Patient Infection Defense Kits,” also holds the potential for saving lives.

Hospitals across the country and right here in Rhode Island see millions of patients each year, and we cannot begin to express our appreciation for the tireless efforts of doctors, nurses and other staff members in keeping us healthy. They can't do it alone though, and for just \$26.95, we hope they'll consider selling these kits – or maybe even giving them away – in their facilities. After all, the best defense is a good offense.