Suburban Life

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Research critical in serious illness

TNDERSTANDING THE MEDICAL lings and being able to ask the proper questions are among the top pieces of advice Lydia Cunningham has to offer in her new-found role as a patient advocate.

nam has to offer in her new-tound role as a patient advocate.

"Before you can take control of a situation you have to understand what's going on," said the Bloom fellow from the patient resident. However, and the properties of the patient resident, which was through the medical red tape when her husband was critically ill.

"The best way to start is with literature specifically written for the lay person, stuff you can find in the public libraries."

Many libraries carry health encyclopedias that give basic descriptions of most illnesses, their symptoms and methods of treatment. Sometimes these books can even be found in the children's section, Cunnitors.

Sometimes these books can even be found in the children's section, Cunningham said.

A library's magazine index will list all of the articles on a particular subject written in the popular magazines. A newspaper index will list the same for newspapers. These methods can be helpful to the lay person.

"PEOPLE CAN also call organizations involved with the particular disease they're trying to learn about," Cunningham said. 'Some of the more common groups can be found in the telephone book."

For those that aren't, a health information center hot line can refer callers to any of 1,000 appropriate

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- Lydia Cunningham

hot lines, federal agencies or private organizations.

The center also offers bibliographies of health materials, resource lists on financing health care and a directory of federal health agencies, Cunningham said. Its number is 1-800-336-4797.

By doing this basic research a person will obtain a working knowledge of the medical language and the illness they face, Cunningham said.

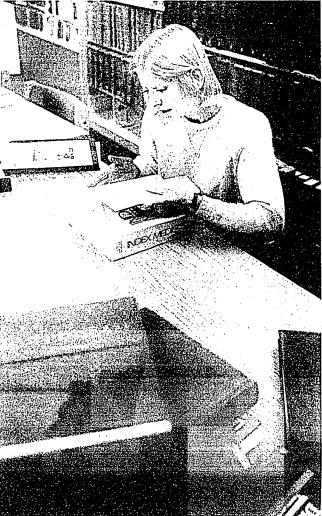
Once this groundwork has been laid, the researchers can then move on to medical school libraries, which are open to the public. Local residents can use the libraries at the University of Michigan School of Medicine or the Wayne State University School of Medicine.

Hospital libraries are another information source. They are usually open to hospital patients and their families or te lie public with a doctor's authorization.

eral information, Cunningham said, but the medical journals will hold articles on the latest treatments. The Index Medicus, updated monthly, is a guide to finding theso journal articles. However, bedree it can be used the researchers must know the formal medical term for the illness or treatment for which they re looking. The index then will list names of articles, who wrote them and where that person is from It's up to the researchers to figure out which ones they may need to read, Cunningham said.

A new MEDLINE computer search will sean Index Medicus for you, but there is a charge, usually around \$25, and it must be done through a librarian.

"This isn't a two-hour process, it's a lot of work. But you can get a lot further if you're able to talk to the physician more on his or her level," Cunningham said.



Advocate

Bloomfield woman offers help through the world of medicine

By Robecca Haynes staff writer

CLOSE CALL with her husband's near death has band's near death has been death has been death of the control of

moliganat brain tumor more than maliganat brain tumor more than Econus of her persistence and determination, Joseph Cunningham is alive and well today and expected to live a long, foll life. Although they both remember the experience as extremely traumatic and difficult, both say they weren't expecting to have to fight their way through a medical system which could at times seem aimost unwilling to help them find the answers for which they were searching.

"When Joe was diagnosed I decided I would educate myself so that I

"When Joe was alagnosed I decided I would educate myself so that I could talk to the doctors," Lydia said, "I found out about an experimental type of laser surgery belog done at the Mayo Clinic that seemed appropriate, but his doctors told us it wouldn't work for him and to stick with the traditional treatment."

THAT TRADITIONAL treatment

THAT TRADITIONAL treatment would have involved surgically removing as much of the tumor as possible, a treatment which Lydla says does not have a very high success rate.

Because she continued to ask questions and was bold enough to call the surgeon at the Mayo Ciliot, she discovered this new treatment could be very effective for her husband's tumor. They took the next plane to Minnessota and the gamble paid off.

"I knew that if I sat by and did nothing he was going to die," he said. "I thought to myself how could I look at my children if that happened and I hadn't done anything to try and stop it.

"This experience taught me that doctors don't always know the latest procedures that are going on in other states," Lydla said. "Everything changes so rapidly and there are so many medical journals that it's very difficult for doctors to read everything, and even if they de know, they're real reluctant to recommend experimental treatment in another and allored to the whether a physician rest standard.

state."

Malpractice, she said, is defined by whether a physician met standard practice procedures for their community, so if a physician doesn't refer a patient for experimental treatment elsewhere, it's not considered malpractice.

HER EXPERIENCES prompted Lydia to write an article which was published in Woman's Day magazine and from that point on a new career had begun. She began receiving letters from people who were in similar situations and didn't know which the strength of the HER EXPERIENCES prompted

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