

Healthcare Advocate

Fifty years ago, doctors traveled to the homes of their patients, watched as families grew and spent time talking to their patients. Now the average office visit is 11 minutes and physicians may be seeing as many as 40 patients a day. To counter the long waits for rushed appointments, the confusion about what types of care are available and best suit your needs, and the stress of navigating the U.S. healthcare system, a new profession has emerged—the professional healthcare advocate. While many families have typically relied on a member of the family who, by default in difficult situations, becomes the dedicated healthcare advocate for a loved one, the education and training of professional healthcare advocates is expanding as the U.S. healthcare system buckles under the weight of cost control, bureaucracy and treatment options.

For more than 20 years, Sarah Lawrence College has offered a graduate degree in health advocacy. Several other colleges and universities have followed suit, creating both graduate and undergraduate programs of study for those who wish to become healthcare advocates. Most graduates of these programs become healthcare policy advocates, professional healthcare advocates, or work in hospitals or other medical settings as ombudsmen and patient representatives, responsible for helping patients and their families find the care and services they need within that particular institution.

But there's an exciting new development within the field—the private professional healthcare advocate who is not tied to a single medical institution or network of doctors. These specially trained individuals can be found at PinnacleCare, where a **healthcare advocate** does more than guide patients and families to the best care available. PinnacleCare's healthcare advocates manage the entire healthcare process, from collecting medical records from all of the healthcare practitioners a family has seen, to expediting appointments and completing the necessary paperwork, to accompanying patients to appointments to act as an objective “second pair of ears.”

“By creating a comprehensive service that provides independent, high quality professional health management 24/7, we are able to help people who are confused by the multiplicity of treatment options and the complexity of medical information,” explains John Hutchins, Managing Director of PinnacleCare, the firm at the forefront of this new form of comprehensive private healthcare management. “The role our healthcare advocate team takes on extends far beyond the traditional definition of healthcare advocacy to comprehensive, personalized management of the whole healthcare experience for the entire family. When you're dealing with a serious medical situation, it's only natural to be overwhelmed. People tend to be confused about their options and too distracted or upset to ask the important questions that need to be asked. A professional healthcare advocate takes up that role, taking notes, doing research, providing information in layman's terms, and asking questions. This allows the family members to turn their energies toward loving and supporting the patient.”