



MANITOBA INSTITUTE  
FOR PATIENT SAFETY

## Make It Personal: Interview Series

### An Interview with Kevin Turner

May 3, 2021

Prior to Kevin's life-changing heart attack and critical incident, he was enjoying his retirement with an active lifestyle along with his family, that included bicycling, skiing, running, and sailboat racing. Due to the nature of his situation and ongoing healthcare journey, Kevin now volunteers his time with an eConsultation project in Manitoba and Quebec as a patient partner/patient advisor and is also a member of two committees with the Bruyere Research Institute in Ottawa.



#### Where the journey began

Kevin is open about his story. While at his cabin, Kevin was awakened by significant back pain. In the ambulance, the paramedics did an EKG and took him to the closest rural Emergency Department. After spending over six hours in the waiting room, once he was assessed he was informed that he had experienced a massive heart attack. The physician apologized for their error. He was transferred to Winnipeg for treatment. A critical incident investigation was conducted by the original hospital, and as a result several recommendations from the report were implemented. These changes to the healthcare system will undoubtedly save many lives over time.

However, over the following four years, Kevin's resulting condition caused over 20 Emergency Department visits, eleven hospitalizations, and three operations. During this time, there were five occasions in which he brought his underlying issue to the attention of his healthcare providers, yet each time what he said was disregarded, which at some points caused him further immense pain.

#### Patient Safety from a Patient's Point of View

Kevin has a powerful definition of Patient Safety. "Patient safety means to me that when I am receiving healthcare from healthcare professionals, that no harm will be done to me as a result of the care I am receiving. It means that since I am dealing with professionals, I expect that they will treat me in a professional manner, and that no errors will be committed, or decisions made, that will cause me harm."

He added that patients need to know their rights. They need to know what they can ask, and they need to know how they should be treated. Sometimes they have to stand up for themselves. "You want to be a partner with your healthcare provider, and there's nothing wrong with telling them, 'I don't feel good about this' or 'I'm scared.' Be honest with them."



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Kevin stated, “If patients and healthcare providers can learn something from my story, I hope it’s the importance of treating people with *respect*. If you treat someone with respect, you hope that, and in most cases, you do get treated with respect in return. I think that we can have a better health system, and there would also be more trust on both the part of the professional and the patient. That’s what I’d like to see happen.”

#### Keeping Safe When Seeking Healthcare

When seeking healthcare, Kevin reminds us that it’s possible you may get shy, nervous, confused, afraid, or anxious. You may not understand some of the words that the provider is using. Kevin encourages people to find an advocate who can accompany you during your healthcare treatment, if possible. “When in pain, you are not always thinking straight. You can forget questions you want to ask. Discuss your situation with your advocate, rehearse your questions, write it down.” The advocate can relay how you are feeling, and the urgency of the situation.

Kevin also advises, write down your questions before you seek healthcare and don’t to be afraid to ask questions or have the care provider explain what they said if you don’t understand. Have a list of medications, allergies, and health history with you. Make sure you understand what is on your prescription, like the amounts. A great tip Kevin offered is to take a recording on your phone of what your healthcare provider tells you and listen to it later.

#### Looking to the Future

Patients aren’t the only ones who can prepare for their visits. Kevin would like to see university programs that train healthcare professionals include, as part of their training, having the students practice being a patient. Kevin has had good experiences being a patient who is part of a My Health Team, in which patients are invited to be more involved in their healthcare plan.

Kevin recommends that videos be developed on How to Prepare for an Emergency Department visit. He also suggests live virtual presentations be done with various age-groups to prepare them for healthcare visits and teaching them how to talk with their healthcare providers.

Kevin, on behalf of all Manitobans, thank you for sharing your story, for the advice that you have given us, and for your continued contribution to patient safety through your volunteer work.

*The Manitoba Institute for Patient Safety (MIPS) is an independent, not-for-profit corporation established in 2004 to promote and coordinate activities that improve patient safety and enhance quality healthcare in Manitoba.*

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