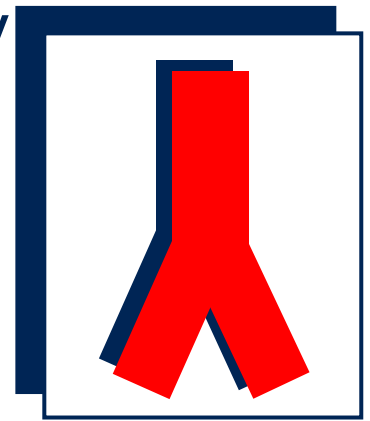


Will Butcher – Vascular Surgery

Patient information

Getting the most out of your appointment



The right frame of mind:

This is probably the most important thing about a successful appointment. During a doctor's appointment, usually you will be trying to find out what he or she knows in a way that is most helpful to you. For that to happen there must be an open and two way communication between you.

- Try and be as calm and relaxed before the appointment as you can be.
- Avoid getting upset during or just before the appointment.....so make sure you know where you are going, what time and what the parking arrangements will be.
- If you do happen to arrive late, it is very unlikely that it will be a problem for me so don't let it be a problem for you.
- If you are concerned you will become upset during the visit, tell me upfront, it's easier to manage that way.

Understanding what happens during an appointment:

When patients see a doctor they usually do so because they have a symptom or a problem that they need help solving. For a doctor to help they will need to ask questions to find out more. Try and answer these questions without trying to second guess what the doctor want. In my case, patients sometimes come with a expectation that I know what is wrong or that there is something simple wrong with a simple solution. In general I will want to go back to the beginning and hear about the problem in your own words rather than just looking at your GP's letter or a scan result.

Sometimes, patients have an expectation which they or their GPs have created. Sometimes this is correct and sometimes not.

Sometimes letting go of these expectations can be a little disappointing for patients but may be important to get the most appropriate outcome. Some patients may come expecting surgery that they do not need and others may be surprised that they need surgery they did not expect

So....try and work out what you think you want from the appointment. I will usually see people to:

- Talk to them about a condition that either you or another doctor has discovered.
- Monitor a condition that we both know about.
- Prepare people for some surgery or procedure.

If you have questions it is a good idea to write them down (and bring the list with you!). It is good to bring the list out early in the appointment so I can be sure I tick all the boxes. (Write the list on a decent size piece of paper so I can draw pictures or write down answers for you.)

Make sure you have relevant Medical Information. Mostly your GP will have sent me a letter with all that I need, however, a history of previous surgeries and consultations you have had for the problem you are coming to see me about is helpful. You do not need to know exactly what was done, a simple explanation in your words is fine – I'll be able to work out the rest,

- Long detailed medical histories are not necessary.
- Prepare a list of your current medications. Your GP may have given this to me but sometimes there are medications the GP does not know about or does not know have been stopped. I especially need to know

about Blood thinning medication, diabetic medication, aspirin and medication for cholesterol.

- If you have had any x-rays or scans please bring along the reports if you have them. Usually all I need are the dates, type of scan and which radiology provider did the tests and I can get the rest on the internet if I need to. It is also OK if you have not had any scans.

Try to be clear about the symptoms you have.

- When symptoms started
- Try and record the severity
- How often they occur
- How long they last
- What seems to alleviate them
- With walking: how far can you walk without needing to stop? What makes you stop?

Do some research if you feel able to. Be careful to be sure you are looking up the right thing. I have seen patients who are frantic with worry because they have looked up the wrong thing on the internet. Get your GP to write down the name of the condition for you. Family members (the younger the better) can help with this.

Have a plan for documenting what you learn

- Use a notepad to jot down the answers to your questions and other notes.
- Alternatively, bring a caregiver or advocate to take notes so you can focus on what I am saying. I am always happy for family or friends to participate in the appointment.
- If I draw a picture for you, you are always welcome to take it with you, just ask. I often forget to hand it over.

About me

I have been doing this for a very long time. Over the years I have seen most things and I have helped many thousands of patients understand what is wrong and found solutions for most. I am pretty confident that I will be able to do the same for you. Occasionally, there are some patients who I can not help either because their problem is quite simply not fixable or it falls outside my scope. In all cases I will try and give you

what I consider to be sensible advice and some sort of an idea where to go next.

Some patients may be disappointed with the outcome of an appointment: Not offered surgery when they expected to be. Upset that their symptoms do not seem to have an immediate or easy solution. Offered surgery when they did not want that. If you find this happening to you, it is good to share this up front. I do not wish patients to leave unhappy (though that does still happen from time to time) but I can be more help to you if you tell me what you are thinking.

Insurance and Medicare

If you are worried about affording the cost of the consultation or surgery please ask me or my team. Running a practice is expensive but it should never be so at the expense of patient's well-being.

- Most consultations have a gap payment. We will send the information to Medicare and they will refund the relevant amount to your nominated bank account if you have set this up with Medicare. There will be out of pocket costs for most.
- Scans also attract a small gap payment from you. Once again Medicare will refund their component to you directly.
- Most surgeries do not attract a gap fee but we will always tell you about this in advance.
- I will not encourage patients to dip into life savings to get surgery done that they need. I have good contacts with the public hospital who will pick up essential surgery if you can not afford it privately.

I have website. I have invested a lot of time in making my website as friendly as possible for patients and their GPs. Please feel free to look there and see if there is some information that might help you. (Also tell me if it's any good – I can't make it better otherwise). www.willbutchervascular.com