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## COMMENT

# Do hospital medical professionals need sensitivity training?

It is counter intuitive, but it seems there is a lack of understanding and empathy within our medical system when dealing with disabled patients.

After all, these professionals must of necessity, and as a possible consequence of their work, deal with a wide range of people with varying disabilities.

I recently called an ambulance due to an extreme gall bladder attack. Fellow sufferers know how excruciating and unrelenting this pain can be. While the paramedics were very professional and understood I could not see well, this information seems to get lost at the hospital. Upon admittance, the hospital was made aware of my disability but this fact was not passed along with me. During staff shift change, they seem not to inform the new staff. But do they need to? Is this information not put onto my admittance and chart particulars for reference? Is it read by the staff? I was eventually treated and released. The nurse said I could go and simply walked away. Where are my shoes? My shirt? My white cane?

I broke my ankle, had surgery and was



**Andrew Tutty**

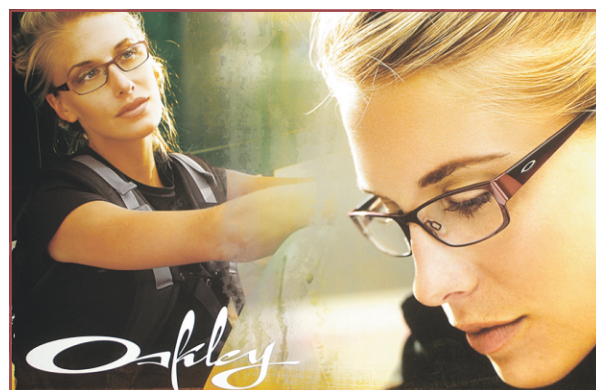
placed in a cast. Before being released, staff wanted me to demonstrate I could use crutches to go up and down the stairwell. I told them I needed a walker not crutches because I can't see well enough to maneuver. Their response was that they don't have walkers.

A pharmacist once enquired about my white cane. "Is that a golf club?" "Yes." I responded. "You should see my handicap!"

When entering the hospital I asked where a department was and was handed a paper map. Not even an X marking the spot? Not very useful.

I think courses in sensitivity and an overview of patient disability issues should be mandatory when acquiring a degree for all health care professionals.

*Andrew Tutty is a member of the Halton Hills Accessibility Advisory Committee*



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