

Three short lists, meant to be used in the moment: in the car, in the waiting room, on the drive home. None of them will do much good read once and set aside.

BEFORE EVERY APPOINTMENT

Answer these together beforehand, out loud, so the visit itself is not the first time anyone in your family has said them.

1. What changed since the last appointment?
2. What is concerning us right now?
3. What decision, if any, are we trying to make today?
4. What would make this particular visit a success?

AFTER EVERY APPOINTMENT

Answer these in the car, or that same evening, while the visit is still fresh enough to be exact about.

1. What changed as a result of this appointment?
2. Who owns the next step?
3. What is still unresolved?
4. When do we follow up, and who makes sure that happens?

AT EVERY TRANSITION

Hospital to home. One caregiver to another. Home to memory care. Memory care back to a hospital. Every transition is where information most often gets lost, because the person handing off and the person receiving usually do not know each other and will not meet again.

1. What is the receiving party being told, and by whom?
2. What does the receiving party assume is already in place that might not be?
3. Who is the one person on each side who can be reached with a question?
4. What from the Family Care Notebook needs to travel with this transition?
5. What is different about this handoff compared to the last one?
6. Who confirms, within a day, that the transition went the way it was planned?

Hospital to home deserves extra attention. It gives you the least time to prepare, it usually happens while everyone involved is exhausted, and it is the one transition where a family is most likely to discover a gap only after they are already home.