

Service Evaluation of Consent for Hand and Wrist Surgery and Formulation of Evidence-Based Guidelines

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Abstract : Background: The current process for gaining patient consent for hand and wrist surgery at University Hospital Southampton (UHS) is paper-based and makes use of generic forms provided by the NHS and no patient information leaflet is available relating to hand and wrist surgery. Aims: To evaluate the process of obtaining clinical consent and suggest ways in which the service can be improved. Methods: A log-book review of four orthopaedic surgeons at UHS was carried out over a three-month period in order to identify the 10 most common types of elective hand and wrist surgeries performed. A literature review was carried out to identify the complications of these surgeries. The surgeries were then divided into 6 types: nerve, bone, ligament, joint, tendon and Dupuytren's surgery. A digitised consent form was created covering the complications of all 6 surgery types. Finally, the surgeons at the orthopaedic department of UHS were asked whether they prefer the old paper-based or the digitised consent form. Results: All of the surgeons felt that the procedure type-based form was easier to read, use and understand. Conclusion: This research highlights a number of problems related to the use of current NHS consent forms. The proposed solution is to use a set of digitised, procedure type-based consent forms. Digital consent forms can be filled in in advance and sent to the patient electronically along with any relevant information leaflets, thus giving them time to absorb the information and come up with any questions before they have their pre-procedure discussion with their doctor. This would allow the doctor to focus the consultation on the patient rather than writing out the consent form and would ultimately be a step forward in making the NHS a global digital leader and fully embrace the opportunity offered by technology.

Keywords : digitised consent form, elective surgery, hand surgery complications, informed consent, procedure type-based consent form

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