

## **SURGICAL PATIENTS PERSPECTIVES ON INFORMED CONSENT DISCUSSIONS: WHAT THEY LOOK FOR (AND DON'T LOOK FOR) IN CONVERSATIONS WITH THEIR SURGEONS**

**Lead Author:** Amritha Kanakamedala, BA (MD Candidate)

**Contributing Authors:** Courtenay Bruce, JD, MA, Allie Schaich, BA, Jennifer S. Blumenthal Barby, PhD, Vadim Sherman, MD, FACS, Peter Angelos, MD, PhD, FACS

**Category:** Improvement Science

### **Background**

Studies on surgical informed consent focus on surgeons' behaviors or perspectives. Patients' perspectives are largely understudied. We sought to fill this gap by qualitatively interviewing patients, focusing on what patients look for in their surgeons' interpersonal demeanor, while also exploring patients' preferences regarding the content of the conversations with surgeons.

### **Objectives**

To qualitatively assess patients' perspectives on surgical informed consent.

### **Methods**

Using a structured interview guide, we interviewed 30 adult, outpatient, English-speaking, post-operative surgery patients between March and December 2015. We analyzed interviews using qualitative description with constant comparative techniques. We also administered the Control Preferences Scale with each participant to provide a fixed-choice component to our study.

### **Results**

Surgical patients in our study conceptualized informed decision making in ways that depart from classic ethical models in key ways: (a) they deliberated on risks, benefits, and alternatives outside and before the first clinical encounter; (b) they put emphasis on how surgeons said something rather than what surgeons said; (c) they conceptualized surgeons' "experience" differently than empirically-derived outcomes.

### **Discussion**

These findings could serve as impetus for future research on whether and how ethical models of decision making should reflect the realities of patients' preferences for surgical informed consent. Our findings call into question the legitimacy of the presupposition that patients want surgeons' performance data. We believe the goals of publicly disclosing surgical "report cards" should be revisited.