

OP14

Documenting informed consent in Pediatric Neurosurgery – What is often missed? An audit from a pediatric neurosurgical centre

Chirag Patel, Julian J. O'Neill Cahill, Adikarige H.D.Silva, Haren E.Wijesinghe, Alia Murtaza, Desederio Rodrigues

Birmingham Children's Hospital, United Kingdom

Introduction: High quality record keeping is universally recognised as an important form of objective evidence that healthcare professionals can offer to demonstrate highest standards of medical-care provided to our patients. In paediatric surgical practice, consent forms are a crucial medical record encapsulating the attainment of informed consent from a parent/guardian, for performing a surgical procedure on their child. It is also used during the pre-operative WHO surgical safety checklist for confirmation of patient, procedure, site and laterality. We prospectively evaluate adequacy of documentation of parental consent in our unit.

Methods: We analysed the medical records and consent forms of forty-two children needing neurosurgical procedures over a 3-month period (September-December 2013) evaluating the adequacy of documentation based on available best practice recommendations. Data analysis was performed using content analysis method.

Results: The following key issues were highlighted. Identifying hospital number was absent in 10%. In 16/42 cases where this was relevant, laterality of operation was only documented in 56%. In 5% of all cases, procedure-specific risks documented were found to be inadequate. General and anaesthetic risks were not discussed in 86% and 66% respectively.

We found that in 36% of cases where fathers signed the consent form, legality of parental responsibility to provide consent had not been assessed. In 4 cases where children also signed consent forms in addition to their parents, there was no documentation of the child's capacity to consent. Consent for use of media (intra-operative video recording/photography) had been obtained in only 33% of cases.

Conclusion: Consent forms provide objective evidence and documentation of shared decision-making processes between the surgeon, patient and their guardian/carer. An important form of confirmation pre-operatively during the surgical safety checklist, it also provides parents with documentation highlighting important risks and benefits regarding the surgical procedure. Our pilot audit highlights multiple areas for improvement in this important process.