Informed Consent for Surgery During COVID-19

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Abstract

Informed consent has become a challenging issue when surgery at the time of novel corona virus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is to be performed, in view of increased risk of the need of intensive care unit (ICU) in the post-operative period and the associated high mortality if a patient exhibits COVID-19 symptoms in the post-operative period. We have devised a new informed consent format for all patients undergoing surgery incorporating a few points specific for the disease.

Keywords COVID-19 · Consent · Pandemic

Introduction

Informed consent for surgery, which is a critical component of surgical practice, has become a challenging issue in the time of COVID-19 infection. There are few specific requirements which need to be discussed pre-op during this pandemic with the patient and the relatives, in order to avoid any unnecessary medicolegal issues. We have devised the first pro forma of informed consent of such patients undergoing surgical intervention.

Informed Consent During COVID-19

On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the novel corona virus disease 2019 (COVID-19) a global pandemic, which classifies the outbreak as an international emergency. In a retrospective cohort study of 34 operative patients with confirmed COVID-19, 44.1% of patients required ICU care in the post-operative period and mortality rate was 20.5% [1]. Therefore, it is very important to devise a separate informed consent for operative patients during COVID-19,

taking all the risk under consideration. We are reporting the first ever informed consent pro forma especially designed for COVID-19 patients undergoing surgery.

Consent Form

Discussion

The Canadian Medical Protective Association reports that over a recent 5-year period, 65% of medicolegal cases involving informed consent were surgical and only 21% of these cases were decided in favour of the surgeon [2]. It is mandatory that prior to obtaining consent for the proposed surgery, the surgeon must provide the patient with detailed information about the nature of the surgery, the expected benefits, alternate treatments and the consequence of not having the surgery [3].

In a country like India, the need for ICU in the post-op period must be discussed with the patient's relative as it involves an increased financial burden. There are also concerns about the lack of pre-op COVID testing in India due to paucity of commercial testing kits. A normal patient may develop or contract corona virus infection in the peri- or post-operative period which should be again documented in the consent form. Hence, a detailed modified consent form was designed exclusively for all patients who require surgery during this pandemic.

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INFORMED CONSENT DURING COVID PANDEMIC

It has been explained to me in a language I understand that patient
 years of age, Hospital ID No / Aadhar No:with the diagnosis of
has been admitted under Dr..... for
 emergency/elective surgery during the COVID 19 pandemic. In this
 time, every hospital is considered a high risk zone for transmission of Corona SARS virus. Therefore,
 any surgical procedure carries additional risk, as the patient, patient party, hospital staff or the
 treating doctor may be an asymptomatic carrier or an unsuspected COVID patient and there is a
 chance of the surgical patient contracting the illness in the post- operative period. That may entail
 prolonged hospitalisation, ICU transfer and care and a 20% increased risk to life in these
 circumstances. At the present time, there is /there is no provision for COVID testing in this hospital.

I have agreed to treatment in this hospital, after having understood these facts. I also give an
 undertaking that I/my patient does not have any signs and symptoms
 of the SARS COVID infection (fever, cough, difficulty in breathing, loss of taste sensation and /or loss
 of smell) at present. I hereby understand that the doctor will take all possible precautions to prevent
 such an infection from happening. I promise to follow all protocols prescribed for the safety of the
 patient by him/her. I have also been counselled regarding the additional cost of protective
 equipment required. I hereby authorise Dr....., and her/his team to operate on
 the patient. In event of the patient or party contracting the Corona SARS Virus infection, even after
 all protocols are followed, I will not hold the doctor, the hospital or its staff morally or legally
 accountable for the same.

This is to state that I, have comprehensively explained the information
 above along with the discussion/explanations provide by the doctors, to the patient and/or his/her
 attendant in a way which I believe he/she/they can understand and the patient and/or his/her
 attendant have informed me that they have understood the foresaid information completely.

Signature of the patient

Signature of Witness/ Interpreter

Name:

Name:

Contact No:

Contact No:

Date:

Time:

Signature of Surgeon

Name and Designation:

Compliance with Ethical Standards

Conflict of Interest The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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