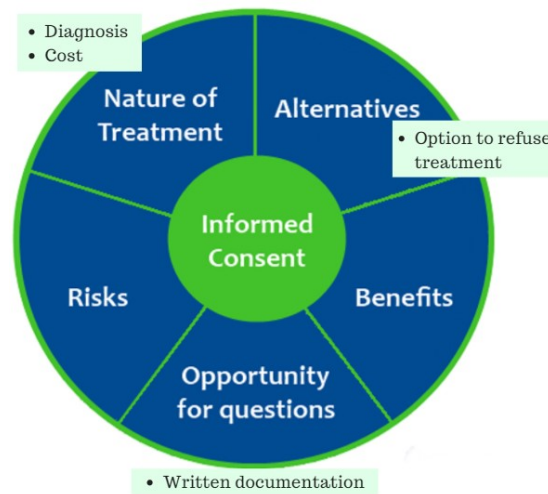


# Informed Consent



This is not new information, but always relevant and important in patient care. Patients have had the legal right to meaningful informed consent since the 1960's. However, this is still an area that can be lacking, incomplete or not well documented between patients and providers.

Patients have a right to be informed of the procedure(s)/ treatment that is being recommended to them. By receiving comprehensive information on the treatment during a conversation with their provider, they have the ability to give proper consent for the treatment.

Patients rely on their providers to provide them with an explanation of recommended treatment, treatment alternatives, an option to refuse treatment, the risk of no treatment, and expected outcomes of treatments that are being recommended. This discussion must be well documented as a part of the patient record. Many providers choose to use written consent forms for patients, especially for more complex dental procedures.

Malpractice insurance carriers may also strongly recommend a written consent form. It can be helpful to review the consent form before the procedure and then again at the time of the procedure. By doing this, the patient has an opportunity to absorb what they have learned prior to having the scheduled procedure performed. It can also be helpful to provide a step-wise consent form for treatment, which allows the patient to consent to procedures as they move along in the treatment plan. This also can facilitate an ongoing conversation with the patient. If the patient had any unexpected results or complications this can also be a good time to discuss. As patients are going through treatment it is imperative to keep the lines of communication open at all times.

Breakdowns between provider and patient communication can have further impact to the relationship and trust between the two parties. This often leads to treatment dissatisfaction or causes the patient to leave the practice if they do not feel that they are being informed, given the opportunity for questions, and collaborating in their care with the provider. Patients need to be empowered and participate in their healthcare decisions. This can lead to better health outcomes and continuity of care.

There are resources available when working with patients with language barriers, as this can be a true barrier to having the conversation with the patient. There can also be issues with low oral health literacy and the patient does not understand what they are being told. They may be embarrassed to ask more questions. Providers need to do their best to offer explanation in understandable terms.

**Engage. Empower. Preserve Informed Consent.**