



Irish College of Ophthalmologists

GUIDELINES ON THE CONSENT PROCESS IN OPHTHALMOLOGY



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Ophthalmologists
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The Irish College of Ophthalmologists recognises the need to provide guidance on best practice on the process of consent for ophthalmic procedures.

These guidelines, developed by the College's Ethics and Professional Standards Committee have been informed by the HSE's National Consent Policy¹. This policy defines valid and genuine consent as *"the giving of permission or agreement for an intervention, receipt or use of a service or participation in research following a process of communication about the proposed intervention"*. It instructs that the process of communication begins at the initial contact and continues through to the end of the patient's involvement in the treatment process. The consent process is not just focused on getting the appropriate signature on the document and the consent form is just one means of documenting that communication has occurred.

The HSE National Consent Policy outlines the general principles of how consent should be sought;

- The patient must have received sufficient information about the nature, purpose, risks and benefits of a proposed intervention
- The information has to be given in a manner that is easily understood and at a time when the patient is able to absorb and understand the information

Framework for the Simplification and Standardisation of Consent Process

1. **Outpatient Clinic**
2. **Booking Office**
3. **Day Surgery Unit or Ward**

1. OUTPATIENT CLINIC

- Doctor and patient discuss the need for intervention, the risks, benefits and alternatives as outlined in the information sheet.
- Doctor gives patient information sheet and a copy of consent form to take away, which includes contact telephone number for queries and name of doctor heading up care team.
- The doctor explains to the patient that on the day of the procedure they will be asked to sign a consent form. It is important that they read the information and ask any questions they may have, as the procedure can only take place if the consent is signed.
- Doctor and patient sign checklist, which is a record that is kept in the patient's case notes, detailing the aspects of the consent process that have taken place. It is a very important record and is signed by doctor and patient:

¹ National Consent Policy QPSD-D-026-1.V.1

Procedure for informed consent in ophthalmology

Sample Checklist

Proposed Procedure _____

Surgical Team Head _____

1. The risks, benefits and alternatives to this surgery have been discussed with me
2. I have received an information leaflet and copy of consent form
3. I understand it is important that I read this information or have it read to me
4. I have asked for, and been given this information in audio/large print/Braille/translated form
5. I understand that I can ask further questions about my procedure at pre-operative assessment and on the day of surgery

Signature of Patient _____

Date _____

Signature of Doctor _____

Print Doctor's Name _____

Date _____

Blank Checklists should be stored in OPD with booking forms for ease of access. Once filled in, signed and dated the form must be filed in case notes.

2. THE BOOKING OFFICE

- Administrator confirms that the signed checklist is in the case notes.
- Administrator sends out date for surgery and includes another copy of the information leaflet and consent form.
- If the checklist is not signed in the case notes the administrator contacts the doctor who signed the booking form to repeat stage 1/OPD

3. DAY OF PROCEDURE

- Doctor confirms that patient understands the information he/she has been given. If not, the information must be given again, particularly where there has been a significant time lapse between the initial OPD visit and the date of surgery.
- Patient given opportunity to ask further questions
- If doctor is satisfied that patient has capacity to give valid consent, and before any pre-med or sedation is given, patient signs consent form.
- If either patient or doctor is not satisfied that valid consent can be given, consent form is not to be signed, and surgery is postponed until outstanding issues are resolved.

Patient Information Leaflets

Information leaflets on a range of ophthalmic procedures have also been compiled by the Irish College of Ophthalmologists. The level of detail provided in the leaflets is in line with ethical and professional standards applied by the Irish Medical Council and legal standards applied by the Irish Courts.

Templates of the Patient Information Leaflets are available on the ICO website www.eyedoctors.ie for members to download.

The clinician consenting the patient must have knowledge and understanding of the risks, benefits and alternatives and must be experienced enough to answer all relevant questions.

Irish College of Ophthalmologists

The Irish College of Ophthalmologists (ICO) is the training and professional body for eye doctors in Ireland.

The ICO is dedicated to promoting and setting the highest standards of excellence and patient care in the practice of ophthalmology in Ireland. We do this by educating eye doctors in training, providing on-going education for eye doctors in practice, giving accurate medical advice to the public and policy guidance to the government.

For further information, visit www.eyedoctors.ie