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Patient's rights

Informed consent

Is the perfect version of autonomy. Its main values are:

- a) Respect for self-determination.
- b) Protection of persons with impaired or diminished autonomy against harm or abuse.

Components of informed consent

a. Voluntariness

In patients' care: Seeking medical consultation is the exact version of voluntariness. It implies consent to being examined. This consent is voluntary, based on the understanding that the

doctor has to check the patient to find out what is wrong with him. This consent cannot be taken as blanket permission for subsequent intervention.

In medical research: The participant's consent to participate must be free of any promises of benefits unlikely to result from participation, or threats about denial of service in case of refusal of participation.

b. Competence

Competence refers to the ability of a person to make a rational decision after consideration of benefits, risks and outcomes of intervention and non- intervention.

Consent is meaningless when the patient is incompetent to make decisions. The patient must be competent to give consent. If the patient is not competent due to mental status, disease, or emergency, a designated surrogate may provide consent if it is in the patient's best interest.(as in infants and children, coma or mental incapacitation, severe stress).

Competence depends to a great extent on mental capacity which is The ability to receive, understand and recall information, it is

the ability to count the consequences and make a decision. (The ability to weigh up information, compare, choose).

C. Disclosure

Disclosing to the patient relevant information about the benefits, costs and risks of the interventions and the possible outcome, and agree to the proposed intervention or refuse it. Physicians should clarify The expected benefits to the patient and/or society, the potential of side effects, risks, stresses, and discomforts and alternative plans of management.

D. Understanding

The patient must understand what has been explained and must be given enough time to ask questions and have them answered by the physician as well as to have a second opinion.

The informed consent document must be written in lay language, avoiding any technical terms.

E . Consent

To sign an agreement accepting the decision and the consequences.

Refusing treatment

In general a health care provider must obtain a patient's informed consent prior to administering medical treatment. If the patient is rational and understands the consequences of refusing the treatment, doctors must respect the decision.(it should be documented, better in the presence of witnesses).

This means that the patient's right to autonomy is the primary ethical consideration (not the doctors desire to do well).

However, in emergency situations saving life or preventing permanent injury is the primary concern of doctors even without voluntarily consent.

For example, if a person is badly injured in a car accident and is unconscious when he/she arrives at the emergency department.