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Patient Rights related to telemedicine

Informed consent is a process of communication between you and your health care provider that often leads to agreement or permission for care, treatment or services. Informed consent makes sure that your healthcare provider has given you information about your condition along with testing and treatment options before you decide what to do. The information can include

This information can include:

The name of your condition (diagnosis)

The name of the procedure / treatment recommended and its specific details

Risks, side effects, possible complications, benefits and probability of success; of the recommended treatment or procedure; and of other options, including not taking treatment.

A consent form is a legal document that ensures an ongoing communication process between you and your health care provider. Informed consent often leads to agreement or permission for care, treatment, or services. Care providers are required to provide patients with the medical information necessary to make a decision regarding proposed treatment.

The care provider should

Inform patients of their rights when receiving telemedicine, including the right to stop or refuse treatment,

Have a formal complaint or grievance process to resolve any potential ethical concerns or issues that might come up as a result of telecare.

Describe the potential benefits, constraints, and risks (like privacy and security) of telemedicine

Inform patients of what will happen in the case of technology or equipment failures during telemedicine sessions, and state a contingency plan

Signing informed consent means you have received all the necessary information and you have had a chance to ask questions and to choose all or some of the treatment options, and you have agreed to the risks and benefits of chosen options. Completed and signed form is a legal document, that ensures ongoing communication process between you and your health care provider and lets your doctor go ahead with the treatment plan. Your healthcare provider may choose to use methods other than a verbal discussion or a written document, such as videos, interactive computer modules, audio files or other methods to help you understand the information better.

The signed consent form is considered a legal document only if the patient was given adequate information and has understood it. The patient has the legal right to refuse consent or withdraw consent for any proposed treatment. The consent must be free and voluntary in order to be valid, meaning it has to be given while the patient is not under undue pressure or influence. Generally consent of parents or legal guardian is required prior to medical treatment of a minor.

Be sure you understand all the information given, even if it means going over it many times or asking your provider to explain it in different ways.

For any treatment option, before signing the consent form, you are required to take active role, ask questions to the provider. You should find out whether procedure offers a diagnosis, pain relief or cure; whether it will be under local or general anesthesia and risks involved in it, whether there can be any complications. You should also inform the doctor regarding risk factors such as diabetes, hypertension, cardiac problems, renal problems or habits such as smoking, alcohol or other drugs which may increase your individual risk. You should also ask what side effects you should expect and how long it will take for recovery. You should ask for special instructions to be followed before, during and after treatment as its success may depend on following such instructions. If you have doubts or you do not fully understand the information the provider gives you, then ask again or ask the provider to give information in another language or for an interpreter. You can ask for another appointment to discuss your doubts or fears more fully, or ask for referral to another specialist to get second opinion.