

Statement from Canadian Medical Protective Association in Relation to Informed Consent in COVID-19 Environment

April 20, 2020

Considering COVID 19 and the demand for patient consent; here are the CMPAs recommendations for patient consent:

'In general, the CMPA advises physicians that consent forms should not replace discussion and dialogue. While forms are helpful as written confirmation that explanations were given and the patient agreed to what was proposed, a written consent form does not, in and of itself, fulfil the requirement for obtaining informed consent. The key for obtaining informed consent is a good discussion between the physician and patient. Such a discussion should be documented on the chart highlighting the relevant details of the consent discussion.

Accordingly, if a consent form cannot be signed (or there are reasonable and justifiable clinical reasons for avoiding its use in the circumstances), consent may be confirmed and validated adequately by means of a suitable contemporaneous notation by the treating physician in the patient's record. In these circumstances, we assume that it will still be possible to provide the consent form to the patient so that the form might be used as an aid for the informed consent discussion, even if the patient will not physically sign (or return) the form for the record.

It is also important to note that hospital policies may speak to this issue, and physicians are encouraged to speak to hospital administration prior to adopting new practices in this regard. '

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