

# Consent checklist

The patient should be aware of the purpose, nature, likely effects, risks, and chances of success of a proposed procedure, and of any alternatives to it. The fact that a patient has consented to a procedure on one occasion, does not create an open-ended consent which can be extended to subsequent occasions. Consent must be obtained for specific procedures, on specific occasions.

Ask yourself:

- Is the patient capable of making a decision? Is that decision voluntary and without coercion in terms of the balance/bias of the information given, or the timing or context of its provision?
- Does the patient actually need the treatment, or is it an elective procedure? If an elective procedure, the onus upon a clinician to communicate information and warnings becomes much greater.
- What do I think will happen in the circumstances of this particular case, if I proceed with the treatment? Have I communicated this assessment to the patient in clear terms? Can I give an accurate prediction? If not, is the patient aware of the area(s) of doubt?
- What would a reasonable person expect to be told about the proposed treatment?
- What facts are important and relevant to this specific patient? (If I don't know, then I am probably not ready to go ahead with the procedure anyway.)
- Do I need to provide any information for the patient in writing? Has the patient expressed a wish to have written information? (Am I relying upon commercial marketing material produced by manufacturers and/or suppliers? If so, is this information sufficiently balanced in the way it is presented?)
- Do my records accurately and sufficiently reflect the details of the communication process? Will they allow me to demonstrate, perhaps many months or years from now – what information was given to the patient, on what terms, and what was said at the time?
- Does the patient understand what treatment they have agreed to, and why? Have they been given an opportunity to have any concerns discussed, and/or have their questions answered?
- Does the patient understand the costs involved, including the potential future costs, in the event of any possible complications?
- Does the patient want or need time to consider these options, or to discuss your proposals with someone else? Can you/should you offer to assist in arranging a second opinion?
- If you are relatively inexperienced in carrying out the procedure in question, is the patient aware of this fact? Are they aware, (if relevant) that they could improve their prospects of a successful outcome, or reduce any associated risks, if they elect to have the procedure carried out by a specialist or a more experienced colleague?
- If the technique is relatively untried or of an experimental nature, has the patient been made aware of this? Included here are any procedures for which the evidence base is limited or absent.

## Summary of consent

1. First and foremost, respect any patient's fundamental right to decide whether or not they wish to proceed with any dental treatment.
2. Assess the patient's competence to consent, bearing in mind their age and their ability to understand:
  - a. the nature of the proposed treatment, b. its purpose, c. any risks and limitations and d. comparisons with any alternative treatment options which are available (including that of doing no treatment at all).
3. Satisfy yourself regarding the authority of the patient (or that of anyone else acting on the patient's behalf) to give consent to the proposed treatment.
4. Provide the patient with as much information as is appropriate and relevant (and as is required by the patient) regarding the points raised at 2 (a) (b) (c) (d) above. Invite questions from the patient, and answer any such questions fully, truthfully and fairly, trying to avoid making any dismissive comments about any possible risks.
5. Satisfy yourself that consent has been given voluntarily.
6. Bear in mind the situations where it might be sensible to give written information/warnings as part of the process of obtaining a valid consent from the patient, and where written consent is a requirement of the Malaysian Dental Council.
7. Keep good and careful records of all matters concerning the question of consent.