

Informed Consent

Which are better: general or procedure-specific forms?

Often, a procedure-specific form is better because it spells out the risks and benefits of a proposed treatment more clearly than a general one. Of course, patients who better appreciate what a proposed treatment entails will, in turn, likely make smarter decisions about their healthcare, comply more and, where an unexpected result occurs, stand by their original decision.

As an aside, please remember that obtaining informed consent is a process, not merely getting a signature on a form. By statute in most states, proper informed consent requires the provider to relate the: 1) proposed treatment or therapy; 2) risks and benefits; 3) likelihood of success; 4) treatment alternatives; and 5) potential outcome with no treatment. The risk list need not be exhaustive; only things materially likely to occur. Patients should be given plenty of time to review the form (preferably with the help of family and friends) and ask questions of the provider.