Orthopedic Surgeons Improve the Patient Experience

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Today’s orthopedic surgeons face many issues, such as dealing with information technology, pushing forward biologic solutions to orthopedic problems, few insurance-reimbursed therapies, increasing costs of implants, reimbursement challenges, and increasing demands for “peer-to-peer” reviews with the insurance companies. [1]: However, there is an ever-evolving business model that includes patient empowerment and improving the patient experience in four distinct areas of orthopedic surgical practice:

1. Proper management of postoperative expectations by improving preoperative education
2. Patient-completed outcomes measures;
3. Better preoperative and postoperative pain management; and
4. Appropriately applied, minimally invasive surgical strategies.

Improving the patient experience has been shown in a number of studies to reduce the frequency and severity of professional liability claims. [2] [3] [4] [5] MMPSI consultants suggest that orthopedic surgeons consider incorporating these evidenced-based recommendations into their practices:

- **Set outcome and patient behavioral expectations immediately** so that both surgeons and patients know
what is expected.

- **Be clear on the realistic results of the proposed surgery.** For example, it's not a back pain cure.
- **Preoperative educational classes** that walk patients through each step of the surgical process have been shown to be very beneficial. Also, there are some excellent on-line procedure-specific patient educational programs that may be incorporated into a physician's informed consent process.
- **Discharge planning** is crucial. Pre-surgical discussions with patients and their families need to consider all potential obstacles associated with their post-operative living arrangements.
- **Provide compassion and empathy** to patients faced with the uncertainty of their medical conditions and disability
- **Utilize a team approach.** Multidisciplinary medical professionals working together throughout the entire patient treatment process often leads to a better outcome both with respect to keeping the patient engaged, and uncovering their specific issues, concerns and goals.
- **Treat pain effectively.** A team approach involving nurses, physician assistants, residents and pain specialists — before and after surgery — and open communication with the patient at all points of the care continuum will help put patients at ease.
- **Postoperative pain management protocols are extremely helpful.** Postoperative pain is oftentimes the patient's greatest fear. Communicating a clear plan of action regarding aggressive pain management will calm concerns and assuage fears of surgical procedures.

**Finally,** if a minimally invasive or less-invasive approach will achieve both surgeon and patient treatment goals, it should be pursued. Limiting surgical trauma and shortening hospital stays always improves the patient experience[6].

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References:


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