

Risk Management Considerations in Orthopaedic Practice

Orthopaedic providers encounter various risks in day-to-day practice. Medical errors, adverse outcomes, and near-miss events can result from issues related to technical skill, clinical judgment, communication, documentation, clinical systems, and more. The following checklist provides high-level considerations in several areas for reducing these risks and improving patient safety in orthopaedic practice.

	Yes	No
<i>Communication</i>		
Do you provide patients with pertinent information, such as practice policies, patient rights and responsibilities, medication refill policies, work-related restrictions, etc.?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you actively listen to patients without interrupting and repeat information to clarify meaning?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you use layman's terms when talking to patients about procedures, treatment plans, anticipated benefits, potential risks, and alternative therapies?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you adhere to a comprehensive informed consent process that includes verbal and written patient education? (Note: A thorough informed consent and education process can influence patient satisfaction.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are patient education materials written in plain language?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you ask patients to repeat, in their own words, their understanding of proposed treatment plans and informed consent discussions?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	Yes	No
<i>Communication (continued)</i>		
Do you use interpreting services for patients who have language barriers?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you actively communicate and collaborate with the clinical teams providing patient care (e.g., primary care physicians, other consultants, etc.)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Diagnosis</i>		
Do you perform a complete assessment for each patient, including establishing a differential diagnosis and considering appropriate diagnostic testing?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you include the worst case scenario as part of your differential diagnosis?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you implement and utilize clinical pathways to standardize processes and support quality care?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you considered using decision support systems, diagnostic timeouts, consultations, and/or group decision-making to support clinical reasoning?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you ensure timely ordering of tests and consults to prevent problems associated with ruling out or documenting abnormal findings?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you review all diagnostic test results and consultative reports prior to filing them in patient records?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are high-risk patients systematically tracked to avoid failures in follow-up and diagnosis?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you carefully consider repeated patient complaints or concerns when making clinical decisions about patient care and additional diagnostic testing?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Treatment/Surgery</i>		
Do you conduct a thorough pre-procedure screening of patients for risk factors?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you follow evidence-based guidelines specific to your specialty?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	Yes	No
<i>Treatment/Surgery (continued)</i>		
Do you ensure that all appropriate health information for each patient is available prior to the start of a procedure?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are necessary equipment and supplies inventoried and verified prior to the start of a procedure?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are infection prevention and control best practices used to maintain the sterile field?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are patient safety precautions utilized during each procedure (e.g., proper positioning)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you and your surgical team participate in a timeout before each procedure?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does anesthesia monitoring occur throughout each procedure?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you and your surgical team communicate about patient status throughout each procedure?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is a qualified healthcare provider immediately available during patients' recovery periods?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you maintain a consistent postprocedure assessment process?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are patients appropriately monitored following procedures (e.g., vital signs, airway, mental status, pain, hydration, etc.)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are patients evaluated against discharge criteria prior to discharge?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are patients and families/caregivers provided with appropriate education and instructions prior to discharge?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do patients receive a postdischarge follow-up call?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	Yes	No
Documentation		
Do you follow organizational timeframes for completing documentation?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does each patient’s health record contain thorough and appropriate information, such as history and physical, current medications, nonpharmacological interventions, allergies, pain assessment, test results, consults/referrals, treatment goals, preoperative screening results, etc.?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you document the clinical decision-making process, treatment rationale, and follow-up plan?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you document all phone calls and electronic communications related to clinical care?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you document the informed consent process, including discussion of risks, benefits, and alternative treatment options?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are informed consent forms (if applicable) maintained as part of patient records?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is required preoperative data documented and available at the time of surgery scheduling?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you complete a detailed operative report the day of each procedure?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you document all instances of patient noncompliance as they occur, as well as any education provided to patients and families/caregivers regarding the consequences of not following the treatment regimen?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Clinical Systems		
Does your organization systematically track diagnostic and consultative referrals from inception of the order until receipt and signoff of results?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has your organization established appropriate timeframes for following up with patients about test results, lab work, etc.?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are phone calls related to clinical care triaged by a clinician or through use of a written algorithm?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	Yes	No
<i>Clinical Systems (continued)</i>		
Does your organization include review of clinical systems and administrative functions as part of quality improvement initiatives?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Training and Performance Improvement</i>		
Do you ensure adherence to credentialing policies, including evaluation of procedural skills and competency with equipment?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you participate in peer review activities to improve performance and quality?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you continue to enhance your technical surgical skills and communication skills through continuing education?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does your organization routinely evaluate quality indicators and implement performance improvement plans to reduce patient risks?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does your organization ensure that staff and provider training is consistent with roles and responsibilities?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do providers and staff in your practice/facility receive appropriate training on new or upgraded systems and technologies?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

This document should not be construed as medical or legal advice. Because the facts applicable to your situation may vary, or the laws applicable in your jurisdiction may differ, please contact your attorney or other professional advisors if you have any questions related to your legal or medical obligations or rights, state or federal laws, contract interpretation, or other legal questions.

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