Checklists In The OR Increase Patient Safety

The use of the World Health Organization's Surgical Safety Checklist in the operating room considerably lowers the risks of surgery. This is the conclusion of Axel Fudickar and co-authors in their article in *Deutsches Ärzteblatt International*, the German Medical Association’s official international bilingual science journal.

The Surgical Safety Checklist, which was introduced by the WHO in 2007, has the main effect of improving commmunication of the most important pieces of information before the induction of anesthesia, during surgery and immediately after the procedure. Since the checklist was introduced, its use has ben found to lower perioperative mortality by 47 percent and 62 percent in two published studies, and to lower perioperative morbidity by 36 percent in both. The checklist requires, among other things, that the patient's identity, the names and functions of all team members, and the correct designations of the instruments and other aids used in the procedure must be checked before it is begun.

A supplementary questionnaire revealed that a large majority (90 percent) of the participating physicians would want the checklist to be used if they were to undergo surgery themselves. The authors maintain that the list is particularly likely to improve communication culture, teamwork, and safety in the operating room when it is understood as a vital tool that is used for this purpose, not just as a list of items to be crossed off.

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