New Guidelines Standardize Pre-Operative Practices, Reduce Patient Risks

(PRNewswire) Washington State surgeons and the Strong for Surgery program have announced the release of standardized guidelines for pre-operative care in the form of pre-surgical checklists. Strong for Surgery is issuing a set of checklists and tools available to all surgeons to use in their offices or by patients at home to ensure that the health of patients is optimized before surgery.

The Strong for Surgery checklists assess whether patients have modifiable risks for surgery and then offer a set of interventions to reduce the risk before hospitalization. They address four target areas:

- Nutritional support to prevent infections.
- Reducing cigarette smoking.
- Reviewing and coordinating potentially dangerous medications.
- Improving diabetes care before surgery.

Nearly one-third of hospitalized patients experience adverse events related to their care, and far too often these events are preventable. While quality improvement initiatives have made surgery safer and have achieved improved outcomes, they usually focus on the care of patients once they enter the hospital. Strong for Surgery provides the opportunity for early intervention to reduce risks prior to hospitalization. A group of surgeons developed the Strong for Surgery pre-surgical checklists. The State of Washington was an early adopter of the SCOAP [1]surgical checklist, ensuring that every operating room across the state posted the operative checklist in 2010.

Strong for Surgery is a public health campaign that engages doctors, nurses, other clinical staff and – most importantly – patients and their families to make Strong for Surgery checklisting universal. Free toolkits to assist doctor's offices, clinics and hospitals in successfully implementing the Strong for Surgery checklists are available on the website at www.strongforsurgery.org [2]. The toolkits contain all of the Strong for Surgery checklists, and all of the accompanying resources, references, forms, and other supporting materials. There is a specific section on the website for patients, so that individuals may download the checklists and bring them to their doctor's office to ensure that any areas of concern are reviewed and addressed.

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