The surgical safety checklist: legacy and next steps

In England and Wales February 2010 saw the implementation date for the surgical safety checklist. Has it really made a difference and what are the next steps? Over to Suzette Woodward, Director of Patient Safety, National Patient Safety Agency, to tell us more...

In February 2009, the National Patient Safety Agency (NPSA) Alert set out expectations for implementation of the Surgical Safety Checklist across the NHS in England and Wales. Over the past year Patient Safety First in England and ‘Saving 1000 Lives’ in Wales have provided support to NHS trusts. The level of enthusiasm and commitment shown by NHS staff across England and Wales has been truly impressive and great progress has been made. Perioperative nurses and practitioners have been at the heart of this movement and the AfPP has played a major role as part of the coalition of agencies involved. However, there is still much to do to ensure that the benefits are fully realized.

Based on feedback from the frontline, the introduction of the ‘five steps to safer surgery’, i.e. including the addition of pre and postoperative list briefings to the three stages of the checklist, has been shown to be essential to bring about the required culture change that the checklist was designed to achieve. This approach also helps increase efficiency and flow. In addition many trusts have adopted an approach to implementation that begins by adapting, testing and measuring their improvement on a small scale before systematically and carefully spreading to other areas. This more considered approach to ‘spread’ means that changes become locally owned and success is more likely to be achieved.

Therefore, with this additional emphasis, while 1 February 2010 is the deadline for the Alert, the NPSA will continue to support trusts in the broader objective of introducing team briefs and debriefs for all theatre lists as well as continued implementation of the checklist using methodology recommended by both campaigns. The NPSA is recommending that organisations continue to implement the checklist in a planned way, and develop their spread plans for rolling it out across their organisation. Continued support has been identified as a key programme in the NPSA’s ‘10 for 2010’ patient safety improvement strategy. It is absolutely vital that we maintain a sense of urgency and pace of change - this is what our patients deserve and our fellow colleagues expect.
Disclaimer

The views expressed in articles published by the Association for Perioperative Practice are those of the writers and do not necessarily reflect the policy, opinions or beliefs of AfPP.

Manuscripts submitted to the editor for consideration must be the original work of the author(s).

© 2010 The Association for Perioperative Practice
All legal and moral rights reserved.

The Association for Perioperative Practice
Daisy Ayris House
6 Grove Park Court
Harrogate HG1 4DP
United Kingdom

Email: hq@afpp.org.uk
Telephone: 01423 508079
Fax: 01423 531613