Improving Equity and Efficiency in Labour Epidural Consent using QR Codes: A Quality Improvement Project

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Background

Informed consent for labour epidural analgesia requires understanding of the risks, benefits and alternatives. For patients whose first language is not English, barriers such as ***limited access to translated information, time pressures*** and ***reliance on interpreters contribute to care inequalities*** [1].

In our tertiary obstetric centre, provision of translated epidural information was inconsistent, highlighting the need for a ***more accessible*** and ***sustainable approach*** to support equitable consent.

Our aims:

1. To ***improve equitable access*** to ***information*** about ***labour epidural analgesia*** and ***support informed consen***t.
2. To improve the ***efficiency*** and ***experience*** of the ***anaesthetic consent process.***

Initial Survey

Baseline surveys were completed by ***15 postnatal patients*** and ***18 anaesthetists.***

Patient survey assessed:

1. First language
2. Receipt of epidural information
3. Self-rated understanding (0–10)
4. Willingness to use QR-code resources

Anaesthetist survey explored:

1. Provision of written information for non-English speaking patients
2. Interpreter use
3. Perceived impact of language barriers on consent time

Summary of Results:

Post-natal Patients:

1. All English-speaking patients (6) reported receiving written or digital epidural information antenatally or intrapartum, compared with ***1/9 non-English-speaking patients.***
2. 66% (6/9) of non-English-speaking patients stated they would use a QR-code resource if available.

Anaesthetists:

1. Written information was provided variably when obtaining consent from non-English-speaking patients.
2. Professional interpreters were used by 14/18 anaesthetists.
3. ***Consent commonly took an additional 20+ minutes in these patients.***

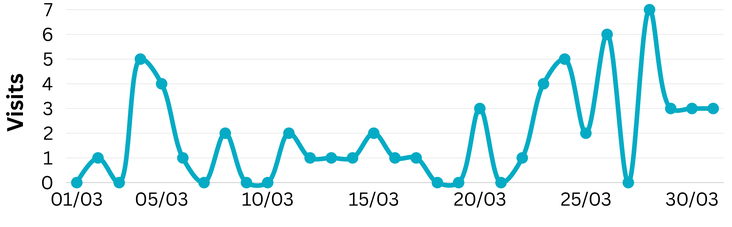
Positive Change

A ***QR-code intervention*** was introduced on labour ward using laminated sheets with 24 language-specific links to LabourPains epidural information [2], supported by midwifery education.

Due to loss of materials and inability to track use, this was redesigned as a ***single QR-code poster*** linking to a multilingual webpage with ***usage analytics***. Engagement was monitored weekly.

Post-intervention, anaesthetists were re-surveyed and qualitative feedback was collected from midwifery staff.

Post intervention, usage data showed ***sustained engagement.***



Qualitative feedback from anaesthetists suggested ***improved information accessibility, greater confidence in patient understanding,*** and ***reduced consent time.*** Feedback from midwifery staff has been overwhelmingly ***positive***.

Discussion

QR-code-based information delivery is a ***feasible*** and ***sustainable intervention*** that improves equitable access to information, informed consent, and efficiency of labour epidural provision.

Further patient-level evaluation is planned, alongside expansion into antenatal care, with the development of a ***dedicated website providing multilingual resources.***

Sneak peek feelready.co.uk

References