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THE UNDERSTANDING AND RECOLLECTION OF INFORMED CONSENT BY LABOURING WOMEN AFTER AN EMERGENCY CAESAREAN SECTION



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ABSTRACT

Background

Informed consent is a regulatory and ethical requirement in medical practice. It forms the ethical basis of a patient-centered approach. In order to give informed consent, the user should be well informed and participate in the decision making. There is contention on whether women in labour can give a valid informed consent.

Objectives

To evaluate the understanding and recollection of informed consent after emergency caesarean section.

Methods

A cross- sectional study at Chris Hani Baragwanath Academic Hospital between May and October 2016. English speaking women older than 18 years were invited to participate. Previous caesarean section, maternal or neonatal complications were exclusion criteria.

Results

One hundred women were interviewed. The mean age was 26.5 years (SD±5.76). All the women recalled the indication for the caesarean section and 90 understood this. Seventy-eight said that risks and complications were discussed, eight said they were not, eleven could not remember and 3 did not know if they were discussed. When women were prompted, the recollection of the risks and complications was better. Seventy-four women wanted full disclosure of all the risks and complications. Eighty-four were satisfied with the information and 93 felt they took part in decision-making without being pressurised.

Conclusion

This study indicates that labouring women can recall indications and mostly understand the reason for the caesarean section. Their recall of complications was poor but better when prompted with specific questions. Most women would like to know about all the risks and complications.