

Ethical considerations surrounding first time procedures: a study and analysis of patient attitudes toward spinal taps by students.

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Ethical Considerations Surrounding First Time Procedures: A Study and Analysis of Patient Attitudes Toward Spinal Taps by Students

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Abstract

A patient is not always told when a student is performing a procedure for the first time. Withholding this information is a form of deception. It is justified on paternalistic grounds (it is in the patient's interest not to know), or on public policy grounds (given the choice, patients would refuse, thus compromising the training of future physicians). Using the spinal tap procedure (lumbar puncture) as a paradigm, 173 patients were surveyed to determine how they felt about first time procedures by medical students, interns, and

residents. The patients indicated that they would be willing to be the subject for a student's (52%), intern's (62%), or resident's (66%) first spinal tap. This paper reassesses the ethics of consent for first time procedures based on responses to this survey.

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ABSTRACT. A patient is not always told when a student is performing a procedure for the first time. Withholding this information is a form of deception. It is justified on paternalistic grounds (it is in the patient's interest not to know), or on public policy grounds (given the choice, patients would refuse, thus compromising the training of future physicians). Using the spinal tap procedure (lumbar puncture) as a paradigm, 173 patients were surveyed to determine how they felt about first time procedures by medical students, interns, and residents. The patients indicated that they would be willing to be the subject for a student's (52%), intern's (62%), or resident's (66%) first spinal tap. This paper reassesses the ethics of consent for first time procedures based on responses to this survey.

INTRODUCTION

MEDICAL TRAINING depends on students, interns, and residents practicing procedures on patients. Therefore, some patients must be exposed to physicians-in-training, who are likely to be less skilled than other available physicians. However, patients are usually not informed of the novice's inexperience, and seldom are they offered the option to refuse to be the subjects of such training. Patients do not commonly participate in what is known as informed consent.

Although consent is generally considered to be the keystone of medical ethics, in the medical setting it is often no more than an elaborate ritual. Patients often do not understand what has just been explained to them. Even when practiced with the best intents, it often falls short of its goal.

For routine procedures, when the risks are well known and minimal compared to the benefit, formal informed consent is commonly waived,



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The Effect of spinal tap test on different sensory modalities of postural stability in

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