

The Victorian Surgical Consultative Council

ROYAL AUSTRALASIAN COLLEGE OF SURGEONS

Correct Side and Correct Site Surgery Guidelines

It is the surgeon's responsibility to identify the patient and to ensure that the operation is performed on the correct side and at the correct site. However, every member of the operating team and anaesthesia team bears a responsibility to ensure that they are aware which side is to be operated on and that an operation is to be performed at the appropriate site. If at any time any member of the team has a doubt that the incorrect side/site is being prepared for surgery, they should immediately voice their concerns. There should be no criticism of persons raising concerns even if their concerns prove to be unfounded.

1. The surgeon is responsible for ensuring that the correct patient undergoes the procedure.
2. The side of the operation should be written in full (i.e. RIGHT or LEFT) and not abbreviated to R or L, whenever the side is recorded. **All** documentation must include the side and site. This includes patient notes, hospital forms and operating theatre lists.
3. The surgeon should be satisfied on which side and site the procedure is to be performed. This should occur in consultation with the patient and the side/site marked.
4. An indelible pen is used to unambiguously mark the side/site of the procedure. This is done by the surgeon in consultation with the patient and operative notes. The patient is informed that the pen mark indicates the site of the operation.
5. The mark needs to be visible within the operating field after preparation and draping.
6. The pen mark is checked by the nurse as the patient leaves the ward or holding area for the operating theatre.
7. The pen mark is checked by the scout nurse prior to the patient entering the operating theatre. This mark must then be verified by the scrub nurse.
8. The surgeon visibly checks the pen mark prior to commencing surgery and ensures this is in accord with his/her intended operation before the induction of anaesthesia.
9. At all stages of this process, there should be consistency of documentation of side/site. If any inconsistency arises progress towards operation should be suspended, the incorrect documentation should be changed and signed, and an explanation of the inconsistency recorded in the patient's medical history and signed by the surgeon. The surgeon should satisfy him/herself of the appropriate side/site of surgery and record this in the patient's medical notes before proceeding with surgery. An incident form should be completed.
10. If the surgeon remains uncertain of the side/site of surgery or the side/site differs from that previously discussed with the patient, the procedure should be cancelled and the patient returned to the ward.

30th October 2003

Review date: October 2005