

FORMFAST[®] White Paper

Electronic Consent:
Setting a New Standard
FOR INFORMED CONSENT

Examining the role of informed consent in the digital era

INFORMED CONSENT TODAY

Most healthcare organizations today are still relying on paper to capture one of the most vital types of documentation that exists in a healthcare setting: informed consent.

Informed consent is more than the consent form that is signed by the patient and providers. It is the communication process that takes place between the provider and the patient about the procedure being recommended. Only when this information has been shared and discussed with the patient, is the consent considered to be “informed” consent.

Ultimately, the goal of informed consent is:

- for the patient to be an educated participant in his/her healthcare decision.
- to provide evidence of consent that serves to document their legal and ethical responsibility (The Joint Commission, 2016).

While consent is more than a signature, the way the consent is documented on a form is extremely important. Failure to obtain informed consent is one of the top ten reasons why medical malpractice claims are filed against hospitals (Glabman, 2004).

Thus, acquiring and documenting informed consent is crucial to ensuring that patients understand and are fully engaged in their care decisions.

ENHANCING THE ELECTRONIC HEALTH RECORD

While the healthcare industry is embracing paperless automation via EHR systems, they are realizing the critical process of informed consent is not addressed by EHR systems.

The lack of standardization inherent to paper-based consent form processes can result in delays and inconsistencies, drain the valuable time of clinicians, expose hospitals to risk, and ultimately, impact patient safety.

For many hospitals attention to the informed consent process has become integral to a proactive approach to key strategic initiatives such as patient experience, cost savings, and risk management.

INDUSTRY INSIGHT

In a survey of HIM Directors from Epic hospitals, **76.5% reported they are still using paper consent forms.**

They have the patients or their family sign them, and then sending the signed paper to HIM for scanning and adding to the EHR.

*Midwest Informatics LLC Report

THE PAPER CONSENT PROBLEM

Understanding the extent to which patients and healthcare organizations are affected by inefficient paper-based consent workflows can be the key to understanding the critical role automation can play.

An eye-opening study from JAMA Surgery reports:

- 66% of patient records are missing a signed consent on the day of surgery
- 10% of surgeries are delayed due to a missing consent form
- Missing consent forms can cost hospitals \$580,000 each year

As the study reveals an inefficient paper process can lead to numerous structural, operational, and logistical faults.

DELAYS, INCREASED COSTS, INCONSISTENCIES, ERRORS

Although the consent setting varies, informed consent is a crucial part of all pre-operative workflow.

Looking at the informed consent workflow, here are just a few of the paper-related challenges that are prevalent in the key steps on the consent process:

DELAYS DUE TO RETRIEVAL & ARCHIVAL

Pre-printed paper consents may not be standardized across an organization, as some areas may have outdated forms on file. Generic forms with free text options increase the likelihood that required elements are missed or incomplete.

Using paper consent forms requires the clinician to know which procedures need multiple consents. Without an automated process, there is an increased chance of missing consents or using an outdated form.

Tracking down paper consents, takes valuable time away from operating room staff, as they must monitor the proper completion and availability of consent forms in the EHR.

INDUSTRY INSIGHT

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LACK OF EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT

Concern regarding the patient's actual comprehension of the informed consent content can potentially expose the physician and organization to liability.

Many paper consents are relatively blank templates that are completed by hand. Providers are required to manually write risks, benefits, and alternatives which may or may not be comprehensive or legible.

Paper does not provide the opportunity to link to other educational content if necessary for further comprehension.

With a paper process, the patient is not able to view the consent form content in the signature capture process.

CUMBERSOME SIGNATURE COLLECTION

Tethered mobile signature capture is difficult for patients to participate in when lying in a prone position.

These devices also present a cumbersome process for staff managing the large equipment.

LACK OF INTEROPERABILITY

Lack of integration with EHRs and other systems adds extra time and room for error when getting the completed form in the patient record and visible to the care team.

Excessive clinical staff and physician time is required to obtain, label, customize, and manage paper consent forms.

This lack of interoperability results in the OR being unable to view consents until they are scanned into the record or faxed to the department. This increases the chance of delay while tracking down paper forms.

SUPERFLUOUS COST

It not only takes plenty of time to fill out consent forms, but paper forms eat up many of a healthcare organization's vital resources.

This includes both the costs of actually accruing the paper and tasks related to faxing, printing, and scanning.

In an industry increasingly focused on efficiency and higher value, there needs to be a better solution for improving the critical process of capturing informed consent.

INDUSTRY INSIGHT

Most organizations have an electronic health record, yet continue to print consents.

Printing a paper consent costs approximately \$0.30 per page, including paper, toner, printing, scanning, storage and wages.

The dollars and time spent on this process adds up to higher costs and inefficient use of FTEs.

A BETTER CONSENT FORM PROCESS

TIME FOR A CHANGE

The newly proposed CMS quality measures challenge healthcare organizations to improve the way they manage informed consent forms.

According to the CMS report, “consent documents are [often] generic, lack information that is relevant to the procedure ... and include illegible, hand-written information.” If approved, starting in FY 2018, hospitals would be required to report the quality of their consent documents.

As government and industry organizations demand the informed consent process meets the necessary requirements for truly informing the patient about their care plans and anticipated procedures, healthcare organizations are seeking a better way to improve the critical process.

Leading healthcare organizations are turning to automation to help ensure proper consent form management and to enhance the patient experience.

This is aligned with the proposed measure that aims to transform the informed consent document from a transactional form used to attain a patients’ signature to a meaningful document and resource to support patients in the decision-making process.

ELECTRONIC CONSENT

Electronic informed consent solutions promote a consistent and patient-centered standard for informed consent that can lead to improved patient autonomy, safety, and higher quality decision-making.

Technology exists today that allows you to replace paper forms with electronic forms that offer many benefits to both patients and staff. With an eForm solution, consents are quickly signed by the patient, immediately archived in the EHR, and instantly visible to the care team.

When you combine the power of mobile technology to the informed consent process, healthcare workers can deliver better patient care and realize higher levels of productivity.



eConsent provides an improved process for the patient, clinical staff, and organization by:

- Reducing incidences of misplaced, delayed and outdated consent forms.
- Streamlining the process and minimizing clinical staff and physician time required to obtain, label, customize, and manage consent forms.
- Reducing the physician and organization’s exposure to liability and compliance issues.
- Reducing the Operating Room staff time required for monitoring the proper completion and availability of consent forms in the EHR.
- Eliminating the expense and resources required to scan and archive consent forms into an EHR system.
- Reducing the cost associated with the printing, storage and waste of paper consent forms.

THE FORMFAST APPROACH

FormFast provides robust form technology that presents clinicians with a simple, intuitive, and straight-forward process to capture consents.

By scanning the barcode on a patient's wristband, the appropriate forms for that patient are launched for review and completion. The patient can read the form on a tablet device at the point-of-care, and conveniently sign the form electronically with their finger or stylus. Staff can then quickly self-sign the form and date-time stamps are automatically applied.

Upon the submission of the consent form, it is archived instantly into the EHR – preventing lost information and making documentation instantly visible to the care team.

FormFast cuts costs associated with paper, toner, printing, scanning and storage by digitizing consent processes and increasing productivity. **On forms costs alone, hospitals can save thousands of dollars per year with FormFast's mobile bedside consents.**

With FormFast, the informed consent workflow is seamless, consistent, and reliable.

IMMEDIATE ACCESS TO THE RIGHT FORM, EVERY TIME

FormFast integrates with your HIS or EHR applications to identify and present the correct documentation for patient signatures on mobile tablets.

PROMOTE PATIENT EDUCATION AND UNDERSTANDING

To ensure the patient's understanding of the consent, the consent format is legible and easily enlarged on a tablet for optimal viewing.

To avoid confusion, the electronic form can include required field to confirm patient understanding.

Hyperlinks to further educational content can also be included to promote patient understanding.



SEAMLESS SIGNING EXPERIENCE FOR PATIENTS & STAFF

FormFast's truly mobile capabilities provide an optimal signature experience for patients in a prone position.

Staff appreciate the ease of leveraging a lightweight tablet to collect signatures.

INSTANT ARCHIVAL TO THE EHR

Consent documents are instantly archived to the EHR upon completion. This prevents lost documents, expedites care, and keeps the hospital in compliance.

ENHANCED INTEROPERABILITY

Due to FormFast's seamless EHR integration, consent forms are automatically generated by receiving ORM messages via HL7.

This streamlines the clinician's workflow and ensures all appropriate consents are completed.

Patient data prefills the forms for faster completion and ensures proper storage with the patient record through HL7 or FHIR.

This seamless integration between FormFast and the EHR is crucial to eliminating human error, standardizing processes, and accelerating form completion.

CONCLUSION

A patient's consent is an integral part of any procedure. Providers have both a legal and ethical obligation to ensure that the elements of adequate informed consent are met and documented.

Many hospitals still collect patient signatures prior to procedures on paper consent forms. With this process, documents must be manually transported, scanned by hand, and archived often hours or even days after they are signed. The inherent inefficiency of this process results in human error, lost documents, and delays in care.

Healthcare leaders want a more efficient, more compliant method of documenting consent to treatment. Clinical leaders want a more streamlined workflow for staff and patients. Risk, quality, and HIM managers want to ensure the document is properly archived.

In order to address these needs, many hospitals are finding eForms and workflow technologies are well-suited to replace the paper process and enable the standardization and efficiency they require.

The consent process can take place anywhere - from the hospital bedside, clinic, ED, ASC, and beyond. **Due to dynamic integration capabilities, FormFast allows clinicians to meet patients where they are to capture consent and instantly archive it to the right location, every time.**

Delivering forms at the point-of-care more effectively is crucial to improving the patient's experience and accelerating the completion of documentation.

Electronic consent management is an important objective as patient health information becomes increasingly digitized and shared.

The right eConsent solution allows healthcare organizations to meet regulatory and legal requirements while creating a more efficient and standardized experience for staff and patients throughout the care continuum.



ENHANCING THE INFORMED CONSENT PROCESS THROUGH INTEROPERABILITY

Best-of-breed features to complement your EHR system, include:

- EHR and document management system integration
- data pre-fill
- discrete data collection
- electronic signature
- dynamic dropdown lists
- hyperlinks to educational content
- document routing
- instant document archival
- patient barcode scanning

FORMFAST

ABOUT FORMFAST

With 25 years exclusively focused on healthcare needs and over 1,100 hospital clients, FormFast is recognized as the industry leader in electronic forms and document workflow technology.

FormFast's enterprise software platform integrates with EHRs and other core systems to automate required documents, capturing data and accelerating workflows associated with them.

By using FormFast, healthcare organizations achieve new levels of standardization and operational efficiency, allowing them to focus on their core mission – delivering quality care.

FORMFAST[®]

COMPANY PROFILE

25 Years in Business Focused Exclusively on the Healthcare Industry

4X Market Share vs. Nearest Pure-play eForms Vendor

1,100+ Hospitals Rely on FormFast Solutions

HIMSS Analytics Reports FormFast as **#1 in eForms for Hospitals**

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