The practices outlined below are currently being used by hospitals to improve patient consent data entry. These practices are reviewed during the NJR Data Integrity audit process to ensure patient consent is being collected and recorded appropriately.

- Stapling the NJR patient consent form to the MDS proforma at the pre-operative assessment stage
- Retrieving the NJR patient consent form from the patient notes in theatre and stapling it to the MDS proforma
- Checking the consent form in theatre and marking up the appropriate consent field in the patient details section of the MDS proforma
- The pre-operative assessment clinic sending the consent form directly to the person entering data so that it can be collated with the MDS proforma
- Local agreement that affixing a patient addressograph to the proforma means that consent has been given
- Having a robust system in place such that consent can be assumed as given unless the person entering data has been notified otherwise. This practice is only suitable where communication channels within the hospital are clear and consistent and every patient is asked for consent

Your local Regional Co-ordinator will be able to advise you of how these examples work in practice and NJR case studies are being developed to share these useful tips and examples of good practice.

Further information

An NJR leaflet and poster are available to display in patient areas. Both the leaflet and the poster introduce the NJR and why the patient is being asked for their consent. They can be downloaded from the NJR website at: www.njrcentre.org.uk or contact the NJR Helpline 0845 345 9991 to order printed copies.

For further information or advice, talk to your Regional Co-ordinator. To find out who your Regional Co-ordinator is, visit the website under ‘Healthcare Providers’ and then ‘Information’. Alternatively, call the Helpline.

Please share this guidance with your colleagues and help raise the importance of collecting and recording NJR patient consent.
Collection of NJR data

The set of data fields collected by the NJR is known as the Minimum Dataset (MDS). The majority of the MDS data fields relate to the patient’s operation details and these are collected in the operating theatre. There is an important subset of data fields in the MDS that are collected separately - and these are the patient personal details.

What personal details are recorded

For patient details to be recorded on the NJR, the patient must give their informed consent; this is in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998. Patient personal details recorded by the NJR are:

- Surname
- Forename
- Date of birth
- Home address postcode
- NHS number

It is important to record all details where known.

NHS numbers and postcodes

The patient’s name and date of birth are important to correctly identify a patient, however, the NHS number and the home postcode are particularly significant for the NJR to be able to achieve its aims. Importantly, the NHS number is used to link a patient’s primary joint replacement with any subsequent revision procedures. This linkage is essential to the NJR so that the survivability of implants can be determined and to allow patient outcomes after joint replacement to be evaluated.

The home postcode is used by the National Strategic Tracing Service to backfill missing NHS numbers where they are not known at the time of data entry. Recording these data also enables patients to be invited to contribute to patient satisfaction surveys. An NJR pilot patient satisfaction survey (known as the NJR Patient Reported Outcomes Interim Study) has had a very good response rate with high quality responses. This illustrates that patients largely welcome the opportunity to participate in patient satisfaction surveys of this kind.

Why patient personal details are important

Collecting patient personal details is an important element of the NJR data collection process because they allow the NJR to:

- Identify patients that have received a specific prosthesis that may later be found to be faulty
- Link a patient’s primary and revision procedures, enabling the survivability of particular implants to be determined (the link being made via the NHS number)
- Invite patients to participate in any subsequent feedback process for patient satisfaction to be assessed and recorded

The patient’s NHS number is vital for determining the survivability of implants and enabling patient outcomes after joint replacement to be evaluated.

Process considerations

Many hospitals are collecting patient personal details effectively, though it has become clear that no one process fits every hospital. It is important, however, that all relevant staff are aware of how patient consent is collected within your hospital.

Written and informed consent

There are three basic principles that need to be borne in mind when collecting patient consent:

- Patients need to know what they are consenting to and why their consent is important to the NJR
- It is important not to coerce the patient into giving consent, however, the patient should be introduced to the benefits of the NJR
- Patients should be asked for their written consent each time they have an operation, i.e. for all operations, primary and revisions

Patients should be asked for their consent for each operation because:

- The patient may have consented in the past but does not want to have any further data entered against their name
- The patient may have withdrawn consent (as is their right) and asked the NJR Centre to remove their personal details from the NJR
- At the time of data entry, it would be difficult to determine whether consent had been given previously

An NJR patient consent form has been developed to introduce the benefits of the NJR and how the patient’s participation will benefit themselves and others. It is recommended that this form be used to collect patient consent. This approach is intended to ensure that the patient is fully informed of the purpose of the NJR and to prevent misconceptions about the use of NJR data. The form also provides a section where consent can be recorded.

Where it is not feasible for your hospital to use the NJR consent form, it is important that the patient:

- Receives information about the NJR so that they can make an informed choice about whether they would like to participate. An NJR patient leaflet is available to help introduce the NJR aims and benefits
- Is asked for their written consent

Asking the patient for their consent - when and where

Generally, hospitals tend to collect patient consent at the patient’s pre-operative assessment. However, there are instances where this is not possible, for example, when patients are referred to an independent hospital from an NHS hospital. Sending the patient the NJR consent form by post is a way of solving this.

Linking patient consent to data entry

Once a patient has given their consent it is important that the patient’s details are submitted to the NJR along with their operation details.

One of the main requirements of the data entry process is that the member of staff inputting NJR data can verify whether or not a patient has given their consent. Therefore, it is important that the person entering the data is made fully aware of the patient’s decision. If consent has been given, the patient personal details should be entered.