

Patient Autonomy and Informed Consent

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1. Introduction

- Patient autonomy is the right of individuals to make decisions about their own healthcare.
- Informed consent is the practical expression of this right.

2. Elements of Informed Consent

- **Disclosure:** giving information about the condition, options, risks, and benefits.
- **Comprehension:** ensuring the patient understands the information.
- **Voluntariness:** the decision must be free from coercion.

3. Capacity to Consent

- The patient must have the mental capacity to make the decision.
- Capacity can vary with the complexity of the decision and the patient's condition.

4. Special Situations

- For minors or those lacking capacity, a guardian or surrogate may decide.
- In emergencies, implied consent may allow life-saving treatment.

5. Right to Refuse

- A competent patient may refuse treatment even if it is life-saving.
- Refusal must also be informed and respected.

6. Summary

- Informed consent protects autonomy and trust.
- Valid consent requires disclosure, understanding, capacity, and freedom from coercion.