

P6

IMPROVING INFORMED CONSENT FOR CHILDREN REQUIRING MAGNETIC RESONANCE IMAGING (MRI) UNDER GENERAL ANAESTHESIA (GA)

T. W. Chan, S. Martin, University Hospitals Plymouth NHS Trust, UK

Background & Context

Obtaining consent for paediatric MRI under GA can be challenging to provide parents with timely and thorough information to aid informed decision making. Following the death of a child undergoing MRI with undiagnosed cardiomyopathy, the national 'Paediatric imaging under general anaesthesia' guidance(1) was published in 2021, with the emphasis on clear communication relating to anaesthetic risks. Recommendations from the guidance advised prompt provision of risk statistics and written information to parents/carers. It also recommended risks should be contextualised by the referring clinician, explaining the perceived benefits of imaging balancing the anticipated risk of anaesthesia.

Our aim is to improve the quality of information on anaesthetic risks provided for parents/carers and to improve parents/carers satisfaction on the informed consent process.

Strategy for change

The Royal College of Anaesthetists(RCoA) recently produced a single-page infographic on the 'Common Events and Risks for children and young people'(2). The referring clinician will use this to discuss anaesthetic risks at the time the decision is made for imaging. The infographic is provided in Paediatric outpatient clinic rooms as laminated cards and on acute wards. A label placed on the consent form confirms the use of the RCoA infographic. Written information which now contains the infographic and a QR code to link to the "information for children, parents and carers" RCoA webpage are sent to parents/carers. The anaesthetist can then focus discussion of risks with informed parents and children on the day.

Measure of improvement

Pre-intervention, 10 parents/carers were surveyed regarding the quality and effect on parental anxiety of the consent process for the scan. This was done in person on the day of their child's MRI under anaesthesia between October-November 2022. A modified Amsterdam Preoperative Anxiety and Information Scale(APAIS) (3) was used to quantify baseline parental anxiety. The infographic intervention was started in January 2023; the survey will be repeated after a sample of 10 children have completed their episode of care.

Lessons learnt

Our initial survey showed that although all parents/carers were informed of the benefits of an MRI for their child, half(5/10) were not informed of the risks of not undergoing MRI. Majority of parents/carers(6/10) were not provided with any written information about risks of GA when the need for imaging was first discussed. Several parents reported that 'they were not given other options but for their child to undergo MRI, therefore felt helpless when told about GA risks'.

Qualitative data from a focus group with paediatricians suggested clinicians understandably feel less confident discussing consent for GA for MRIs and a tool would help to initiate discussions.

Messages for others

Initial findings show considerable potential to improve the process of risk discussion with parents and children requiring an MRI under GA.

References

1. Royal College of Anaesthetist. Paediatric imaging under general anaesthesia. Nov 2021. (shorturl.at/huwF7)
2. Royal College of Anaesthetist. Common Events and Risks for children and young people having a general anaesthetic. 2022 (shorturl.at/el036)
3. Moerman, Nelly MD; van Dam, Frits S. A. M. PhD; Muller, Martin J. MA; Oosting, Hans PhD. The Amsterdam Preoperative Anxiety and Information Scale (APAIS). *Anesthesia & Analgesia* 82(3):p 445-451, March 1996.