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# News

**STS Press Release**

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## **Patients Still Unclear About Risks, Benefits of Heart Procedures Even After Multimedia Presentations**

### ***Challenges exist in educating patients about contemplated medical procedures***

Chicago – Informed consent programs are somewhat beneficial for improving patient comprehension prior to cardiac revascularization, but many patients still have misconceptions about benefits and outcomes, according to a study in the May 2014 issue of *The Annals of Thoracic Surgery*.

Shubha Dathatri, PhD and Todd K. Rosengart, MD, from the Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, TX, and colleagues studied the effectiveness of two pre-procedural educational approaches to enhance patients' knowledge about cardiac revascularization procedures, including percutaneous coronary intervention (PCI; involves the insertion of metal stents into narrowed or blocked coronary arteries).

The researchers randomly assigned 102 patients undergoing first-time elective cardiac catheterization and possible PCI to a scripted verbal/written consent process (Group 1) or a web-based, audiovisual presentation (Group 2). Previous studies have suggested that using interactive or audiovisual materials is more effective than standard verbal or written consent.

#### **Key Points**

- Even with the use of scripted and multimedia consent mechanisms, heart patients still have trouble understanding the risks, benefits, and alternatives of cardiac revascularization procedures.
- Informed consent helps improve patient comprehension, but potentially dangerous misperceptions persisted, especially about procedure benefits.
- A higher level of interactivity, process checkpoints, and a heart team approach may increase comprehension.

“The primary finding of our study was that, contrary to expectations, even with the use of verbal scripted and multimedia consent mechanisms, patient understanding of the risks, benefits, and alternatives with regard to the procedures being discussed during informed consent remained deficient,” said Dr. Dathatri. Notably, the researchers found that patients had inflated expectations about benefits of cardiac revascularization after the consent process.

Prior to the process, overall procedural comprehension level was poor, with only 25% of participants correctly identifying all risks, 0% identifying all the benefits, and 23% identifying alternatives. Although all patients showed improved overall comprehension following the educational program, and patients in group 2 showed significantly greater improvement in identification of treatment alternatives compared with patients in group 1, misperceptions about benefits persisted among patients in both groups.

“Patients overestimated the benefits of PCI, believing the procedure will ‘cure’ them of heart disease,” said Dr. Rosengart. “This misperception is dangerous because patients will need to take heart disease seriously.”

He added that the informed consent process could be improved through an even greater use of interactive tools, as well as incorporation of a “heart team,” where cardiologists and surgeons provide different perspectives on the contemplated procedures.

“We also need to include process check points where the clinician assesses the extent to which the patient understands what is being communicated, clarifies potential misunderstanding, and reviews pertinent information again. These extra steps will help enhance patient education and the informed consent process,” said Dr. Rosengart.

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For a copy of the study contact Cassie McNulty at 312-202-5865 or [cmcnulty@sts.org](mailto:cmcnulty@sts.org).

Founded in 1964, The Society of Thoracic Surgeons is a not-for-profit organization representing more than 6,700 cardiothoracic surgeons, researchers, and allied health care professionals worldwide who are dedicated to ensuring the best possible outcomes for surgeries of the heart, lung, and esophagus, as well as other surgical procedures within the chest. The Society’s mission is to enhance the ability of cardiothoracic surgeons to provide the highest quality patient care through education, research, and advocacy.

*The Annals of Thoracic Surgery* is the official journal of STS and the Southern Thoracic Surgical Association.