THREE THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT:
INFORMED CONSENT

1. Informed consent is an ongoing communication process; it is not a piece of paper. While a signed form does support the assertion that the consent process took place and establishes at least some of what was disclosed, without documentation of the informed consent discussion, a form alone will likely be insufficient to establish that the consent given was truly *informed* consent.

2. Informed consent comprises a discussion of the nature and purpose of the proposed treatment, potential risks and benefits of that treatment, reasonable alternatives to the proposed treatment, risks and benefits of the proposed treatment and the likely risks of doing nothing. The patient should be made aware of material risks - side-effects that occur frequently or those that would be significant were they to occur although the likelihood may be minimal.

3. While listing the risks is important, it often confuses the act of providing information with having the patient comprehend that information. As important as the information given, is how it is received and utilized by the patient. Risks should be presented in such a way that patients appreciate the likelihood that the complication discussed will occur and its possible level of severity.

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