

## Risk Matters: Informed Consent



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Informed consent is often the most important discussion that physicians will have with their patients, but unfortunately, it is sometimes viewed as merely obtaining a signature on a pre-printed form. While lack of informed consent is rarely the central issue in a malpractice lawsuit, it is almost always included as an additional allegation. For this reason, it is important to keep in mind that, while the physician may be assisted by other healthcare professionals in providing consent-relevant patient education and/or obtaining a signature on the consent form, the **individual who actually renders the care is legally and ethically responsible** for providing the information upon which the consent is obtained. What does this mean? When a lack of informed consent claim is alleged, it will typically be asserted against the physician and *not* the nurse or non-physician staff who obtained the signature on the form. From a risk management perspective, the informed consent process plays a vital role in minimizing exposure to medical negligence lawsuits because it involves patients in their medical treatment and helps keep expectations realistic.

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