

The WHO Surgical Safety Checklist



The WHO Surgical Safety Checklist is a simple tool that helps surgical teams adhere to basic standards of care in the operating room. While the items on the Checklist seem like common sense its use has been shown to demonstrably reduce avoidable surgical complications and death throughout the world. The Checklist was originally studied in an eight center multi-country pilot study and the results were published in the January 2009 New England Journal of Medicine Article, *A Surgical Safety Checklist to Reduce Morbidity and Mortality in a Global Population*¹. The use of the Checklist reduced the rate of deaths and complications by more than one third. The rate of major inpatient complications dropped from 11% to 7%, and the inpatient death rate following major operations also fell from 1.5% to 0.8% after implementation of the Checklist. More recently, articles have been published showing similar results in operating rooms in the United States and the Netherlands when a surgical checklist was utilized by operating room teams.

Today, the WHO Surgical Safety Checklist or a modified version of this tool is used in thousands of operating rooms in the United States and throughout the world. The Safe Surgery 2015 team has experiences working with thousands of hospitals that have implemented the Checklist has taught us that process of bringing this into your operating rooms will help improve numerous aspects of patient care and can improve hospital culture. More specifically, the use of the Checklist has helped improve the following in operating rooms throughout the world:

- Patient safety
- Communication and teamwork amongst the surgical team
- Staff retention
- Staff satisfaction
- The partnership between physicians and the hospital
- It may even improve efficiency and resource usage

Similar to all quality improvement projects measurement is vital to implementation and sustaining change. The Safe Surgery 2015: South Carolina team intends to investigate the impact that the Checklist has in the state of South Carolina. For this work administrative databases will be the primary source for tracking this change in care. Additional tools will also be developed to help individual hospitals monitor the spread and effect of the Checklist. This team remains available to assist you and your colleagues with any data analysis that you might need throughout this process.

¹ Haynes AB et al. A surgical safety checklist to reduce morbidity and mortality in a global population. N Engl J Med. 2009 Jan 29;360(5):491-9. Epub 2009 Jan 14.