

Informed Consent and the Clinician-Client Relationship

Informed consent creates a continuing dialogue and promotes a clinician-client relationship that fosters mutual respect, shared decision-making and client autonomy. Informed consent done correctly involves clinicians providing clients with the information necessary to make informed decisions about their treatment.

Two Models of Implementing Informed Consent

The Traditional Approach to Informed Consent: The Event Model

The event model of implementing informed consent treats it as a discrete act to be performed once in each treatment course. While satisfying the legal requirements of providing complete and accurate information, this model can lead to unintended consequences including:

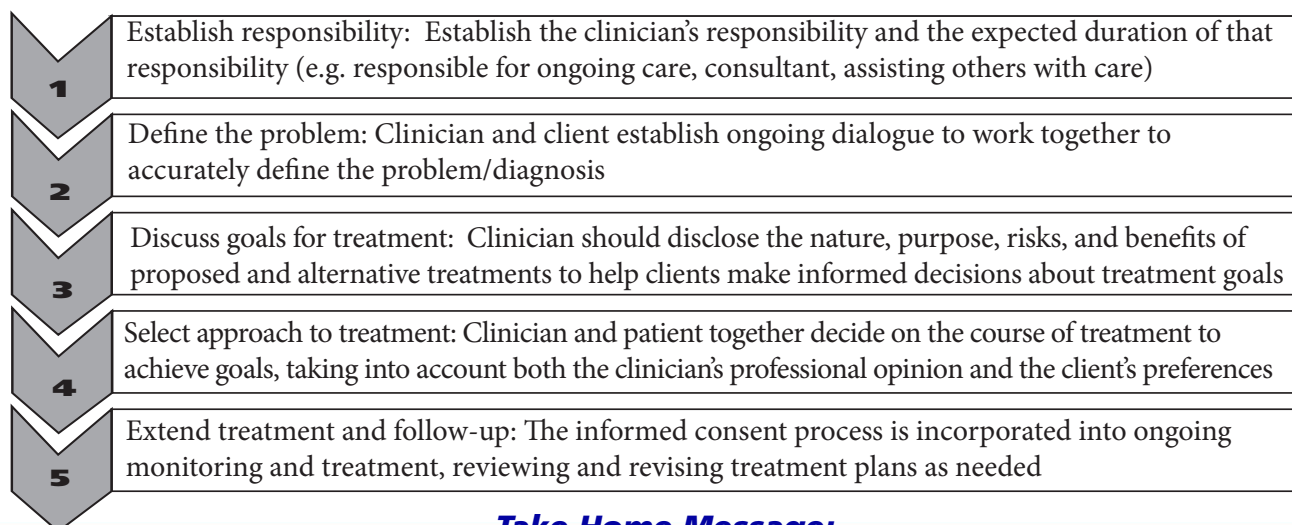
- Not improving a client's comprehension of the treatment process
- Creating a more bureaucratic and less humane clinician and client interaction
- A client sensing that participation in the decision-making process is not desired

An Alternative Approach to Informed Consent: The Process Model

The process model engages the clinician and client in a continuing dialogue to:

- Promote ongoing communication throughout the course of treatment regarding client and clinician expectations for treatment; thus, informed consent is a process, not a single event
- Ensure that the client is able to integrate information into a well-organized understanding of their clinical situation
- Build on a vision of active client participation in treatment decision making

How to Incorporate the Process Model of Informed Consent:



Take Home Message:

Traditionally, the Event Model enabled clinicians to obtain informed consent for the primary purpose of addressing legal protection and ethical concerns. However, the Process Model of implementing informed consent establishes clinician and client as partners in an ongoing dialogue about treatment needs and choices.