



# Safety Surgery Control List in International Patient Safety Targets

## Uluslararası Hasta Güvenliği Hedefleri Doğrultusunda Güvenli Cerrahi Kontrol Listesi

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### ABSTRACT

The World Health Organization (WHO) acted with the project “Safe Surgical Saves Life” in 2008, and the surgical safety check list, which is considered the basis of safety practices in surgery, is presented to employees. It is the main intention to be able to perform patient safety professionally in the provision of safe surgeons involved in the project. Safe surgical practices will also contribute to ensuring patient satisfaction. The purpose of this project is to address the importance of practices that are named “safe surgical safety checklists” in our country and to introduce the list, considering its quality.

**Keywords:** Accreditation; quality of health; safe surgery.

### ÖZET

Dünya Sağlık Örgütü’nün 2008 yılında harekete geçirdiği “Güvenli Cerrahi Hayat Kurtarı” adlı projeye, cerrahide güvenlik uygulamalarının temeli sayılan cerrahi güvenlik kontrol listesi, çalışanların hizmetine sunuldu. Proje kapsamında yer alan güvenli cerrahinin sağlanmasında hasta güvenliğini profesyonel şekilde gerçekleştirebilmek ana hedeftir. Ayrıca güvenli cerrahi uygulamaları hasta memnuniyetinin sağlanmasına da katkıda bulunacaktır. Bu projenin amacı; “Güvenli Cerrahi Kontrol Listesi” adı ile ülkemizde hayata geçirilen uygulamanın kalite çerçevesinde önemini ele almak ve listeyi tanıtmaktır.

**Anahtar sözcükler:** Akreditasyon; güvenli cerrahi; sağlıkta kalite.

With the increasing importance of the concept of “quality in healthcare,” the process of “accreditation in health-care services” has gained momentum, and the adaptability and applicability of “Joint Commission International (JCI) accreditation” standards have become easier. Each safety goal in the “Safe Surgery Checklist,” which is one of the patient-centered accreditation standards, will reduce preventable major medical errors. A list has been created based on clinical reality or expert foresight, stating that the risk of potential injury or high cost will be eliminated. The surgical team coordinates internally and completes the checklist with sections such as “Before leav-

ing the clinic,” “Before anesthesia is administered in the operating room,” “Before incision,” and “Before leaving the operating room.” The implementation of the Safe Surgery Checklist is managed by the nurse or responsible healthcare professional in charge of its applicability, along with the person responsible for controlling the list, at the clinic where the patient is present.

### International Patient Safety

All measures taken by health-care units and the personnel working in these units to prevent harm that health-care practices can cause to individuals are included within the scope of

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patient safety. Patient safety is the most crucial step in providing quality care. The prevention of errors that may occur in the delivered service and the elimination or reduction of patient-related damages caused by these errors is evaluated within the scope of patient safety.<sup>[1]</sup>

International patient safety goals include:

- Correct patient identification
- Improvement of effective communication
- Ensuring the safety of high-risk medications
- Correct patient, correct side, correct procedure, surgery
- Reducing infection risks, encompassing healthcare
- Reducing the risk of harm resulting from patient falls.

The primary objective is to establish a system that prevents errors during the implementation of healthcare services, protects patients from potential harm resulting from mistakes, and eliminates the probability of errors.<sup>[2]</sup> Proper, accurate, complete, and understandable maintenance of the “communication process” is another crucial aspect of ensuring the patient’s assurance during treatment.

## Safe Surgery Checklist

Safe surgery can be defined as ensuring patient safety and minimizing medical harm in line with the potential treatment risks during the entire period from a patient’s admission to a healthcare facility until the discharge process, including the preoperative, operative, and postoperative stages.<sup>[3-5]</sup> Research has shown that half of the complications related to surgery can be prevented through the proper implementation of the World Health Organization’s (WHO) safe surgery checklist.

The achievement of safe surgery is possible through the coordinated efforts of the clinical, operating room, and postoperative care units at every stage of care or treatment. The WHO’s Safe Surgery Checklist was created by the World Alliance for Patient Safety. The checklist was designed to be easily understandable. In line with this goal, the WHO’s statement, “Each institution can modify the checklist according to its own requirements,” led to the adaptation of the Safe Surgery Checklist in Türkiye under the leadership of the “Directorate of Performance Management and Quality Improvement” (Fig. 1). The checklist has been in use in Türkiye since 2009 under the name “Safe Surgery Checklist TR”.<sup>[6]</sup>

Figure 1. Surgical safety checklist.

## Patient Information and Consent

The first stage in obtaining a person’s consent is the obligation to provide information, which plays an active role in medical procedures and actions aimed at individual values such as life, well-being, and the preservation of bodily integrity. From the patient’s perspective, consent reflects the external manifestation of the right to determine one’s life, health status, and the continuity of physical well-being. From the physician’s perspective, it is considered a determining factor in defining the scope of authority and ensuring the legal compliance of the practice.<sup>[7]</sup> Before any invasive procedure involving any kind of risk, information documents within the scope of informed consent should be provided to the individual at least 24 h before the surgical intervention, in a clear and understandable manner, to allow for a thorough examination with a sound thought process, except in emergency surgical cases.

## Identity Verification and Safe Side Surgery

Completing the verification process before the patient leaves the clinic is necessary to ensure the secure implementation of the medical intervention.

The first requirement for performing the correct procedure is patient identification. The purpose of patient identification is to ensure that procedures or treatments related to healthcare services, such as medication preparation and administration, transfusion of blood products, transfer of labora-

tory blood samples for testing purposes, and fulfilling the sequential surgical requirements, are performed on the intended individual in a safe manner.<sup>[5,8]</sup> The most commonly used method for identifying the patient's identity is the use of patient wristbands during the course of their treatment. According to the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO), 13% of surgical errors are associated with errors in patient identification.

During the marking process by the surgical team, preoperative identification, determination of the surgical site, and final identification procedures are performed.<sup>[5]</sup> The use of evidence-based practices, such as the implementation of standardized rules worldwide, plays a significant role in preventing errors in surgery, including wrong-site, wrong-procedure, and wrong-patient surgeries.<sup>[9]</sup> The main steps applied worldwide in surgical procedures include:

- Determining the surgical site
- Patient identification at the beginning of the operation
- Taking a pause before initiating procedural steps.

To ensure “correct patient, correct side, correct procedure” surgery, the designated healthcare personnel should carefully determine the surgical site based on the available data, confirm the procedure and the patient, and take a pause before performing the procedure to prevent possible errors.<sup>[5,10]</sup>

## The Concept of Quality in Health

Quality, when approached as a scientific concept, refers to the degree of excellence that something will exhibit.<sup>[11]</sup> It has the characteristic of being present in all stages of health-care service delivery. The importance of health-care services to society has recently brought the concept of quality to the forefront of health-care practices.<sup>[12]</sup>

Efforts aimed at ensuring the quality of health care involve foreseeing the details in the establishment phase of the system and implementing them during the application. However, having qualified and adequate equipment and fulfilling expectations alone are not sufficient conditions to achieve the desired health outcomes. To ensure continuous improvement and assurance of service quality, it is necessary to continuously evaluate the quality of the services provided, make necessary adjustments based on the results, and aim for continuous development and improvement by using methods such as a reporting system, continuous education, self-assessment, community participation, and

monitoring. The quality of healthcare services is directly linked to the quality of the service provided.<sup>[13]</sup>

It is known that the applied quality should be measurable, followed by the necessity of monitoring measurable quality indicators, and guidelines are published to enable the measurement of quality.<sup>[14,15]</sup> Quality in health care is not static; it is an ongoing process that aims to constantly strive for the desired level of outcomes in service delivery, renew its policies in line with this goal, and aim for improvement and development.<sup>[11]</sup>

## Accreditation in Health-Care Services

Accreditation is described as the evaluation of an institution by an independent organization to assess whether the institution focuses on the recipient of healthcare services and provides quality service or not.<sup>[11,16]</sup> Accreditation, which is designed to improve the quality of services provided by health-care units and to evaluate independently whether the organization meets patient-centeredness and organizational competence, is an effective tool for quality assessment and management.<sup>[15]</sup> Accreditation in health-care services is considered an important term based on the principles of continuous quality improvement, quality control, and management perception.

The purpose of the JCI accreditation process is to assess the compliance of health-care organizations with pre-established and internationally recognized standards to guide organizations in identifying and correcting their problems and enhancing the quality of patient care and healthcare services they provide. The JCAHO grants accreditation for factors such as continuous improvement of services provided by health-care units, increasing quality and safety, and performing performance improvements. JCAHO defines criteria to ensure that hospitals meet specific quality criteria and performance levels.<sup>[2]</sup> These criteria provide health-care units with the opportunity to engage in continuous research and improvement efforts. JCI has been structured with the aim of improving the quality of healthcare services by providing international accreditation services.

JCI reviews international patient safety goals annually to ensure patient safety and formulates new goals against anticipated risk factors. It shares its goals with organizations that have completed the accreditation process and contribute to the implementation process.

## The Importance of the Safe Surgery Checklist in Ensuring Patient Safety

The purpose of the checklist is to ensure that all preparations for the planned surgery are carried out accurately and completely, thereby ensuring patient safety and positively influencing the success of the operation. Effective communication and teamwork among surgical team members increase during the process of initiating and completing the checklist, preventing surgical deaths and potentially serious complications. Thus, the checklist plays an important and determining role in ensuring patient safety. The Safe Surgery Checklist improves the surgical team's effective communication and teamwork by bringing about changes in the working culture in the operating room.<sup>[1]</sup> The responsibility for patient safety moves away from a hierarchical system based solely on one person's supervision and becomes a complex process that involves the participation of the entire team, thus promoting job satisfaction. The WHO predicts that the implementation of the Safe Surgery Checklist could save half a million lives annually.<sup>[17]</sup> The Safe Surgery Checklist allows for the standardization of unstructured practices and situations, reduces human errors in healthcare, and ensures that the patient receives the right care at the right time and place. It paves the way for increased trust in perioperative care.

## Conclusion

In today's health-care field, innovations are an ongoing process. The rapid development of new technologies in medicine, globalization, and the increasing emphasis on universal human rights have contributed to the development of the perception of quality management in healthcare and the growing importance of patient satisfaction.

Patient safety, which is the prerequisite for patient satisfaction, is the most important quality indicator of services provided in hospitals. The implementation of a quality management system in hospitals has a positive impact on ensuring patient safety.

The Safe Surgery Checklist, which has become a necessity in line with the International Patient Safety Goals, encompasses all components that may compromise safety in surgical procedures, whether they are related to the patient, the operation, or the health-care team. By efficiently implementing the Safe Surgery Checklist according to its intended purpose, the verification process is carried out effectively,

leading to the ultimate outcome of improving patient safety and reducing medical errors.

Therefore, patient safety-focused efforts and the continuous improvement of the healthcare system, in accordance with the International Patient Safety Goals, have made the Safe Surgery Checklist an essential tool in surgical practice. It encompasses all the elements that can challenge safety, whether they originate from the patient, the operation itself, or the healthcare team. Efficient utilization of the Safe Surgery Checklist in line with its intended purpose ensures the effective implementation of the verification process, ultimately resulting in improved patient safety and a reduction in medical errors.

## Disclosures

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