The SOGC endorses the adoption of the surgical safety checklist in obstetrics and gynaecology to improve patient safety

Ottawa (Ontario) – The Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada (SOGC) recognizes that in addition to skilled attendants in the operating room who have the appropriate expertise to conduct the required operation, team relationships and communication can have a significant impact on patient safety in the operating room. This is the premise of the clinical practice guideline supporting the use of a Surgical Safety Checklist in Obstetrics and Gynaecology published in the January 2013 edition of the Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology Canada.

Research suggests that almost 1 in 10 patients admitted to hospital experience an adverse event, with operations accounting for 40% of these events. A failure in communication between members of a surgical team represents one possible cause for unfavorable situations or outcomes. Fortunately, studies have proven that the use of a checklist during surgeries has resulted in a decrease in complications and mortality.

“Canadians should be reassured that these new guidelines are not being released because patient safety during medical procedures in obstetrics and gynaecology in Canada is in question or being compromised. On the contrary, because patient safety is a priority for us, we are looking for any opportunities to achieve positive patient outcomes,” stated Dr. Sukhbir Singh, principal co-author of the new guideline.

Dr. Neeraj Mehra, also a co-author of the guideline, agrees. “The SOGC is acknowledging that the development and implementation of a surgical safety checklist is a simple, cost-effective and efficient way to ensure that critical steps of an operation are completed. It also helps to facilitate communication among members of the surgical team.”

Members of a surgical team each arrive on site with their respective competencies, skills, roles and responsibilities. There is a set list of tools and steps involved for each medical procedure. The complexity, volume and speed with which these steps must be achieved can sometimes be challenging, and requires extensive communication between team members, particularly when unforeseen situations arise.

This guideline suggests that outcomes can be improved and lives can be saved by listing, reviewing and documenting key steps and procedures before, during and following surgery to ensure that none are overlooked, regardless of the situations encountered during the procedure.

“A surgical safety checklist removes the risk of assumptions being made about what information was gathered, which tools were used or what steps were completed during an operation. It’s about being meticulous and comprehensive. This is a positive move for both health-care professionals and their patients,” added Dr. Laura Hopkins, the third co-author of the guideline.

Media relations:

Natalie Wright, SOGC Communications and Public Education
About the SOGC

The SOGC is one of Canada’s oldest national specialty organizations. Established in 1944, the Society’s mission is to promote excellence in the practice of obstetrics and gynaecology and to advance the health of women through leadership, advocacy, collaboration and education. The SOGC represents obstetricians/gynaecologists, family physicians, nurses, midwives and allied health professionals working in the field of sexual reproductive health. For more information, visit www.sogc.org.