

Performing New Procedures and Adopting New Technologies

Question

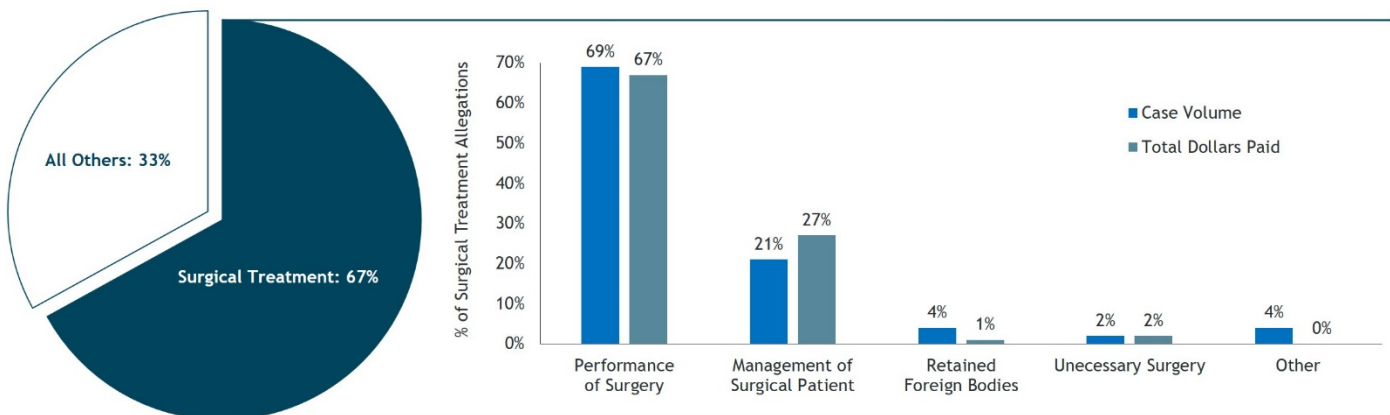
How can healthcare organizations ensure clinicians are properly prepared to perform new procedures and adopt new technologies?

Answer

New procedures and technologies are rapidly being developed. Clinicians who plan to use these techniques must be properly trained and prepared to implement them, or they might jeopardize patient safety and increase their liability exposure.

MedPro Group’s closed claims data illustrate that performance of procedures represents a risk issue in malpractice allegations. Ambulatory surgery claims data indicate that within the surgical treatment allegations – which account for 67 percent of all ambulatory surgery claims – issues related to the performance of surgery are the most prevalent and also account for the largest percentage of total dollars paid for surgical treatment allegations (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Ambulatory Surgery Claim Volume by Allegation Category and Subcategory



Source: MedPro Group ambulatory surgery closed claims, 2008-2017. **Note:** Total dollars paid = expense + indemnity.

Using new innovations may require developing new, enhanced, or more complex skill sets – and varying levels of education and training might be necessary to obtain proficiency. Medical specialty organizations, educational institutions, and other entities (including device manufacturers) in the healthcare industry offer various training programs; clinicians should review each program to determine its substance and value.

Further, healthcare organizations also might require additional privileging, focused professional practice evaluation (FPPE), proctoring, mentorship programs, preceptorships, surgical coaching, or other processes prior to allowing clinicians to perform new procedures or use new technologies.

Each healthcare organization should have (a) a method to determine the technical and cognitive skill sets required for the procedures it offers, (b) written policies and protocols related to mandatory training expectations and oversight requirements, and (c) well-defined processes for assessing clinician competency.

To provide a clinician’s perspective on performing new procedures, Nabeel Shabout, MD, a MedPro Advisory Board member and general surgeon, offered the tips below based on his experience of adding robotic surgery into his practice. However, Dr. Shabout cautions that “it is important to realize that one approach doesn’t work for everyone.”

- Join or form a collaborative group with other physicians performing the same type of procedure or using the same technology.
- Be transparent and explain important risks and benefits to the patient during your informed consent conversation. Provide clear and specific information, and give the patient educational handouts.
- Realize your limitations and be realistic about your scope of expertise.
- Take advantage of manufacturer-supplied training, but be aware that additional training might be necessary to ensure competency.
- Use templates to ensure complete documentation.

In addition to Dr. Shabout's suggestions, consider the following risk management strategies when introducing a new procedure or technology:

- Contact your professional liability insurer to verify coverage of the new procedure/technology.
- Acclimate staff members to the new procedure/technology with education and training.
- Ensure associated equipment and supplies are readily available.
- Verify that your practice has the ability and appropriate protocol in place to bill patients.
- Be prepared to disclose relevant information about the new procedure/technology during informed consent discussions, including an evidence-based presentation of potential risks, benefits, and alternatives without any marketing bias from manufacturers.
- Disclose your level of experience to your patients, especially if you are on the early or steep part of a learning curve. If you're considering using a proctor or preceptor, disclose that information as well during informed consent discussions.
- Adhere to organizational policies related to preceptorships, proctoring, surgical coaching, and other training requirements.

Resources

- [Focused Professional Practice Evaluation \(FPPE\) – Understanding the Requirements \(The Joint Commission\)](#)
- [Guidelines for the Introduction of New Technology and Techniques \(Society of American Gastrointestinal and Endoscopic Surgeons\)](#)
- [Guiding Principles for Privileging of Innovative Procedures in Gynecologic Surgery \(The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists\)](#)

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