Patient Comprehension of Carpal Tunnel Surgery: an Investigation of Health Literacy

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Introduction

• Health literacy is the ability of a patient to understand their medical condition.
• The purpose of this investigation is to determine if patients are able to obtain an elementary understanding of carpal tunnel syndrome and the fundamental principles of carpal tunnel release after going through the process of informed consent and being provided an additional standardized postoperative instruction document.

Methods

• 50 patients with a diagnosis of carpal tunnel syndrome who elected to undergo carpal tunnel release alone were enrolled.
• The patients were informed that at their postoperative visit they would be asked to complete a questionnaire regarding personal demographics, use of the postoperative instruction sheet, the carpal tunnel release surgery, and the postoperative instructions.
• Patients completed the questionnaire at their postoperative visit.

Results

• The average percentage of correct answers was 75.8% (8.34 out of 11 correct).
• Fischer exact test analysis demonstrated that patients with a lower education level were less likely to know how long it takes for their preoperative symptoms to resolve ($p=0.0071$), and they were less likely to correctly choose all of the important elements of postoperative care during the first week after surgery ($p=0.022$).

Conclusions

• Although we made efforts to help patients achieve health literacy in carpal tunnel surgery, we found that patients continued to lack comprehension of pertinent components of carpal tunnel surgery.

References