

produced a number of patient leaflets on contraception.^{18,19} Our study only examined the risks communicated through the written consent form. It is likely that additional information may have been conveyed verbally (with documentation in the medical records) and supplemented through patient information leaflets.

We propose the use of a contraception-specific booklet that would include background information, treatment options with risks and benefits, consequences of not 'managing' contraception (i.e. risks of unwanted pregnancies) as well as a template to capture the woman's risk profile. We believe that this approach would certainly advance the clinician's position with regard to obtaining fully informed consent. Implementation of such a document across the country would confer consistency to the process of consenting. The verbal, written and psychological aspects that span the doctor-patient relationship cannot be captured and entirely quantified; the spirit in which consenting is conducted may be open to interpretation. Valid informed consent could be viewed as a compass guiding us towards the implementation of good medical practice. We believe that the medico-legal complexity of the written consent form is not accurately understood in clinical practice.

Conclusions

Written consent captured by the NHS model consent form is a legally effective adjunct in obtaining patients' consent. Our study demonstrates that our current hospital practice for obtaining written evidence of valid informed consent for laparoscopic tubal occlusion is not optimal. It is evident from recent court rulings that unless all common and significant risks of a specific treatment or its alternatives are clearly communicated to the patient, as a claimant a patient would have the opportunity to mount a case of negligence in the care we provide. This study highlights the need to implement a consenting process that is both medico-legally and clinically coherent. Our recommendation is to implement the use of an entity-specific, patient-sensitive information booklet to strengthen that process.

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BOOK REVIEW

Picking Up the Pieces: A Survival Guide for Victims of Childhood Sexual Abuse. Graham Wilmer, Eve Wilmer, Aidan Hughes, Rory Wilmer. Wallasey, UK: The Lantern Project, 2008. ISBN-13: 978-0-9558750-0-7. Price: £8.50. Pages: 112 (paperback)

Just occasionally, a book comes along that stands head and shoulders above the pack. *Picking Up the Pieces* is one of those books.

If, like me, your work covers childhood sexual abuse, you know that there is always a need for follow-up resources (or indeed for resources aimed at helping the client take those first painful steps to even facing the issues).

Materials need to be informative yet empathetic; it's a difficult line to tread, steering clear of over-objectivity whilst at the same time not falling into the trap of trivial sentimentality. This book treads that line, and surely one of the reasons it does so is that it is written by a sexual

abuse survivor, Graham Wilmer, with help from fellow survivors. As a result, every word is written directly from experience of suffering and coming through the trauma of abuse.

The book falls into two parts. Part One contains clear, practical self-help: what child sexual abuse is, how it impacts through adult life, whether to tell or not, how to begin to resolve the issues, coping with mental health problems. There are specific sections written (by a woman) for female survivors and (by a man) for male survivors. A further legal section is equally helpful (though it presumably runs the risk of becoming outdated; hopefully the book will have regular reprints).

Part Two contains a series of pieces – prose and verse – reflecting the experiences, thoughts and feelings of survivors. These range from a few moving sentences about loss of innocence through to several pages telling the story of a number of abused men. All the pieces, short or

long, have the same ring of wounded desperation, but also of great resilience and hope. The result, whilst unbearably moving, is to send the message – from survivors themselves – that there is a way through the pain to healing.

The book, at just over 100 pages long, is written in wonderfully plain English and is also beautifully illustrated and produced. In short, it is a guide that would surely help any survivor, or their loved ones, and I will certainly be recommending it to suitable clients.

[NB. The book is published by The Lantern Project (www.lanternproject.org.uk), a charity started by Graham Wilmer to help abuse survivors; the website too seems a useful resource to recommend.]

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