Fundamental standards for health and social care providers
Consultation response from the Royal College of Surgeons

The Royal College of Surgeons supports the need to publish fundamental standards of care. These will help to establish what minimum standards of care patients are entitled to, and how providers will be judged by the CQC.

We broadly support the standards published by the Department of Health. In our response to the CQC's consultation last summer *'A New Start',* we also suggested a standard around the quality of communication. We said:

> 'A patient should expect communication which is delivered with compassion, is clear and in language they can understand in order that they are aware of the options around the care available to them and can make an informed choice and give informed consent'

Effective communication and clear information is vital to the patient-surgeon relationship and essential for quality of care and patient safety**.** The College has recognised this principle as a fundamental standard for surgeons in its core standards document, *Good Surgical Practice*.[1] The College's Patient Liaison Group[2] have said that surgical staff need to be skilled in communication, and patients and carers should be fully involved in decision-making and in discussion about changes in care. Good communication with patients is strongly reflected in the General Medical Council's *Good Medical Practice* demonstrating that this is seen as important for all medical specialties, not just surgery.

The need to assess communication was also one of the most commonly identified additional fundamental standards of care expressed by other stakeholders responding to the CQC's consultation. However, none of the standards currently being consulted on cover clear communication, only the content of communication (e.g. '…encouraging service users to make, or participate in making, decisions relating to their care or treatment').

We acknowledge the need to avoid subjective standards, but believe assessing the quality of communication involves no more subjective a judgement than other fundamental standards around 'autonomy' and 'independence'.

We therefore urge the Government to consider revising the current draft standards to include a fundamental standard around the quality of communication.

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[1] http://www.rcseng.ac.uk/surgeons/surgical-standards/professionalism-surgery/good-surgical-practice . NB. Good Surgical Practice is currently under review. A revised version is due to be published in September 2014.

[2] See http://www.rcseng.ac.uk/patients/docs/RCSEngFrancisReportfinaldraftPLGreponseJune2013.pdf