

# Surgeon Perceptions of the Integration of Patient-Reported Outcome Measures into Clinical Practice

Brittini Driscoll, BS<sup>a</sup>, Laura D. Leonard, MD<sup>b</sup>, Alexandra Kovar, MD<sup>b</sup>, Joshua Billings, MD<sup>b</sup>, Sarah E. Tevis, MD<sup>b</sup>, Simon P. Kim, MD<sup>b</sup>, and Ethan Cumbler, MD<sup>b,c</sup>

a University of Colorado, School of Medicine, Aurora, Colorado

b Department of Surgery, University of Colorado, Aurora, Colorado

c Department of Medicine, University of Colorado, Aurora, Colorado

**Introduction:** Patient-reported outcome measures (PROMs/PROM) are standardized, validated instruments used to measure the patient's perception of their own health status including their symptoms, functional wellbeing, and mental health. Although PROMs were initially developed as research tools, their use in clinical practice for shared decision making and to assess the impact of disease and treatment on quality of life of individual patients has been increasing. There is a paucity of research exploring providers' perspectives on the clinical integration of PROMs. We sought to use a qualitative methodology to understand surgeons' perceptions of integrating PROMs into their clinical practices.

**Methods:** Semistructured interviews were performed from November 2019 until August 2020. All interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. Thematic saturation was achieved after interviewing nine surgeons representing eight surgical specialties. Qualitative interview data were thematically analyzed using an inductive approach facilitated by Atlas.ti qualitative software.

**Results:** Forty-seven unique codes were identified that fit into 21 themes that revealed five novel insights. Key insights included: (1) PROM data can modify surgical practice on an individual and institutional level, (2) Surgeon's view PROM clinical integration as a potential method of advancing patient-centered care, (3) There are various institutional processes that must be in place, including strong leadership and an integrative platform, to enable successful clinical PROM integration, (4) Surgeons appreciate challenges of integrating PROMs into surgical practice including risks of incorrect use or interpretation, and (5) A PROM platform must be adaptable to the diversity within surgery and to unique physician workflows.

**Conclusions:** Surgeons perceived value from integrating PROMs into routine care to better inform patients during preoperative discussions and to help identify at-risk patients in the postoperative period. However, they also identified numerous barriers to the implementation of an integrated system for the routine use of PROMs in clinical practice and expressed concern about using PROMs to compare operative outcomes between surgeons. Based on this work, institutions that want to incorporate PROMs into surgical practice need a leadership team capable of supporting the change management necessary for effective integration and use a PROM platform that gives individual surgeons and surgical teams the ability to customize platforms for their unique practices.