



National Emergency Laparotomy Audit (NELA) Patient Information Leaflet

What is an Emergency Laparotomy?

An emergency laparotomy is a major operation where the surgeon has to cut open the abdomen (stomach area). It is called “emergency” because it must be done very soon or even immediately and cannot wait until a later date. It might be carried out for several reasons including internal bleeding, perforation (burst), obstruction (a blockage) or infection. In many cases it might be the only option available in order for the patient to get better.

What is NELA?

NELA stands for National Emergency Laparotomy Audit. A clinical audit like NELA is where an independent body assesses the quality of care in hospitals by looking at how it treats the patients and the outcomes of those patients. NELA is a national clinical audit, so that means it is being carried out in over 190 hospitals in England and Wales. NELA will look at the quality of care received by patients undergoing emergency laparotomy.

Why are we carrying out the NELA at this hospital?

We want to improve the care that patients undergoing emergency surgery receive. To do this we will collect important information on how well your hospital is providing care to you. We will then give hospitals all the valuable information we have obtained. This will highlight areas of their service where they are doing well, and areas in which they can improve. It will also allow hospitals to compare themselves with others all around the country. All hospitals in England and Wales that carry out emergency laparotomy are expected to participate in this audit.

What information is collected?

We will be collecting information about the care you received whilst you were in hospital. This will include information about the investigations and treatment you received, how long it took for different parts of your treatment to be given, and whether you went to a critical care bed after your surgery. Full details of what is being collected can be found the NELA website - www.nela.org.uk

What confidential information is collected?





The confidential information we are collecting is your name, date of birth, NHS number (everyone in the country has a unique number), postcode and sex. This will allow us to match our information with other sources of information that can give us a fuller picture of how well you recovered.

What happens to the confidential information?

We will be collecting this information through a very secure website. Only the hospitals participating, the doctors and nurses working on the NELA in the hospital and the NELA project team will have access to the website. The confidential information will be coded when it is transferred and your information is stored safely in accordance with NHS recommendations, standards and regulations. Data from the audit may also be shared for the purposes of research in order to help improve patient care, and these are listed below. Sharing data with researchers will always be under relevant legal and information governance regulations. Wherever possible only non-personal information will be shared. None of your personal information will ever be made public.

Additional Research

If you had surgery between March 2014 and October 2015 in a participating hospital, your non-personal data may be shared with a study team at Queen Mary University London for the purposes of research. This data will be combined with information from the Office for National Statistics and Hospital Episode Statistics in order to investigate long term outcomes. The study is called EPOCH, please visit their website for more information: <http://www.epochtrial.org/epoch.php>

Why haven't I been asked for permission to use my information?

Because some patients are very sick before and after they have had an emergency laparotomy, it would be very hard to ask all patients for their consent. It is important that we get information from all patients, not just those that are well enough to give consent. That's how we can provide an accurate overview of quality. It can be a distressing time for patients and their families, and asking them about this project at this time would not be their most important priority.

What if I do not want to have my confidential information included?

Please email info@nela.org.uk and put "Patient request to opt-out" in the subject line. We will then contact the hospital to make sure that they do not enter your details into the audit. If they have already entered your details, we will ask for them to be removed.

Alternatively, please notify a member of your local care team that you wish to opt out. We will then ensure that your details are not entered in the audit. If they have already been entered, we will ask for them to be removed.

