Four Consent Abilities, Definitions and Suggested questions for assessment

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Understanding: The ability to comprehend information about the disorder and treatment(s).

Ask: Tell me in your own words what your understanding is of your condition? What treatments does the doctor recommend? What are the risks and benefits of each? How likely are the benefits and risks to occur?

Appreciation: The ability to determine the significance of the treatment, focusing on the nature of the diagnosis and the possibility that treatment would be beneficial.

Ask: What do you believe is wrong with your health? Do you believe that you need some kind of treatment? What is the treatment likely to do for you? What do you believe will happen if you are not treated? Do you believe the doctor is trying to harm you?

Reasoning: The ability to reason about treatment(s) comparing alternatives in light of consequences, drawing inferences about impact of alternatives on everyday life.

Ask: Tell me how you reached the decision to accept / reject the treatment? What factors were important to you in reaching the decision? How did you balance those factors? Why did Treatment A seem better than Treatment B?

Choice: The ability to communicate a decision applying to those who cannot express a choice or are ambivalent.

Ask: Have you decided whether to go along with your doctor’s suggestions for treatment? Can you tell me what your decision is?