Surgical checklists reduce postoperative complications but have no significant effect on mortality, according to a review published in the June issue of *Anesthesiology*.

Brigid M. Gillespie, Ph.D., R.N., from Griffith University in Gold Coast, Australia, and colleagues conducted a systematic literature review to identify studies evaluating the impact of surgical checklists on complication rates.

Seven cohort studies (37,339 patients) were included in meta-analyses. The researchers found that use of checklists led to a reduction in any complication (risk ratio [RR], 0.63; P blood loss (RR, 0.56; P = 0.0001; NNT, 33), compared to standard practice. Mortality (P = 0.191), pneumonia (P = 0.857), and unplanned return to the operating room (P = 0.068) were not reduced with checklists.

"Notwithstanding the lack of randomized controlled trials, our synthesis of the existing body of evidence suggests a relationship between checklist use in surgery and fewer postoperative complications," the authors write.

More information: Full Text (subscription or pay)