Surgical Database Checklist

1. Have a solid research question and clear hypothesis. Consider using the FINER or PICO criterion to develop these.

2. Ensure compliance with the institutional review board and data use agreements.

3. Conduct a thorough literature review. Use a reference management program for ease in manuscript development.

4. Make sure this is the best data set available and that it has the appropriate variables to answer your research question.

5. Clearly define the inclusion criteria, exclusion criteria, and outcomes variables. Use a flow diagram to describe final patient selection.

6. Identify potential confounders and use risk adjustment to minimize bias. Consider using a directed acyclic graph to represent potential associations.

7. Ensure that the data variables have not changed over time. If so, account for this.

8. Ensure that competing risks are identified and addressed.

9. Ensure that data issues, such as missing data, are discussed and that any sensitivity analyses or imputations performed are reported in a clear and cohesive way.

10. Ensure that your article has a clear take-home message that addresses how your research advances current knowledge and has important policy or clinical implications.