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Original article

## Eliminating routine upper gastrointestinal contrast studies after sleeve gastrectomy decreases length of stay and hospitalization costs

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Background: Recent series have shown the lack of value of routine upper gastrointestinal (UGI) contrast studies on postoperative day 1 or 2 for the detection of gastric leak (GL) after sleeve gastrectomy (SG). Despite this finding, many centers still perform routine early UGI contrast studies after SG. No series has evaluated the impact of eliminating this examination on the overall management of patients undergoing SG.

Objectives: To evaluate the impact of UGI contrast studies on SG management.

Setting: University hospital, France, public practice.

Methods: This study was an ambispective study of a cohort of patients who underwent primary SG between January 2014 and December 2014 (n = 267). Two consecutive groups were compared: patients with routine UGI contrast studies on postoperative day 1 (UGI+ group, n = 154) and patients without routine UGI contrast studies (UGI- group, n = 113). The efficacy endpoint of the study was the overall impact of not performing routine UGI contrast studies (length of hospital stay, radiological data, rehospitalization data, and economic assessment).

**Results:** The overall complication rate was 9.3% and no deaths were observed. The GL rate was 1.5%. The mean hospital stay was 1.8 days (2.1 days versus 1.5 days; P = .57). Routine UGI contrast studies did not detect any cases of GL or gastric stenosis. After UGI contrast studies, 56 patients complained of events related to UGI contrast studies (36.4%). A total of 27 computed tomography scans were performed during the first 3 postoperative months (16 in the UGI+ group (10.4%) versus 11 in the UGI- group (9.7%); P = .52). Twelve patients were rehospitalized (7 and 5; P = .6). The median length of rehospitalization was 7 days (7 and 5 days; P = .6). Overall cost per patient during SG hospitalization was \$5,219 in the UGI+ group and \$3,678 in the UGI- group (P = .01).

Conclusion: Eliminating routine UGI contrast studies was associated with decreased length of hospital stay and cost of SG procedures. Larger series are required to show that not performing routine UGI contrast studies has no impact on the postoperative complication rate and the management of these complications. (Surg Obes Relat Dis 2016:∎:00–00.) © 2016 American Society for Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery. All rights reserved.

Bariatric surgery; Sleeve gastrectomy; Upper gastrointestinal contrast studies; Cost evaluation; Gastric leak

Laparoscopic sleeve gastrectomy (SG) is a safe procedure for the surgical treatment of obesity with a mortality rate of .2% [1]. Along with postoperative hemorrhage and

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gastric stenosis, gastric leak (GL) is the most dreaded
surgical postoperative complication of SG. According to a
recent meta-analysis, the incidence of this complication is
2.2% [2].

Many institutions perform routine upper gastrointestinal 66 67 (UGI) contrast studies within 24 hours of surgery looking for GL or gastric stenosis and to determine the need for 68 urgent re-exploration. Several studies have shown the lack 69 of value of routine UGI contrast studies following Roux-en-70 Y gastric bypass (RYGB) [3] and clinical signs (particularly 71 72 tachycardia) should be preferred for postoperative observa-73 tion [4].

The American Society for Metabolic and Bariatric 74 75 Surgery guidelines state that the decision to perform routine versus selective UGI contrast studies following SG should 76 77 be left to the discretion of the surgeon [5], although many recent studies have also shown that routine testing for 78 gastric leak on postoperative day (POD) 1 or 2 [6-8] is not 79 useful for the detection of GL and only 1 study identified 80 tachycardia as a predictive factor of GL, but without the 81 82 same level of evidence as for RYGB. The lack of value of 83 performing early, systematic UGI contrast studies is due to the fact that GL is a rare event after SG and occurs after the 84 5th POD [9,10], and several different mechanisms are 85 responsible for the development of GL, such as ischemic 86 87 causes due to aggressive dissection of the posterior surface of the fundus [11], increased intraluminal pressure [12], and 88 staple misfiring [13]. 89

Routine UGI contrast studies on the days following SG 117 delays oral feeding, can cause side effects responsible for an 118 increased length of hospital stay (LOS), and is responsible 119 for systematic and probably unnecessary irradiation of the 120 patients. In our department, we have stopped performing 121 routine UGI contrast studies after SG based on our 122 experience with day-case SG, for which routine UGI 123 contrast studies were responsible for 50% of our unplanned 124 overnight admissions, while failing to demonstrate any 125 complications [14]. 126

The objective of this study was to evaluate the overall 127 impact of eliminating routine UGI contrast studies over 2 128 consecutive periods. 129

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## Methods

## Patient population

134 From January 2014 to December 2014, all consecutive patients who underwent primary SG (n = 267) were 135 included in this study. This was a comparative, ambispec-136 tive study of patients undergoing primary SG, correspond-137 ing to a before/after study. From January 2014 to June 138 139 2014, we systematically performed UGI contrast studies on 140 POD 1 to exclude the presence of GL. These patients constituted the UGI+ group (n = 154). Our postoperative 141 management changed in July 2014 after eliminating routine 142 143 UGI contrast studies on POD 1 from the protocol (these **F1**144 patients constituted the UGI- group, n = 113 (Fig. 1).



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