



Original Research

Transumbilical laparoscopically assisted extracorporeal appendectomy in children and young adults: A retrospective cohort study



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HIGHLIGHTS

- Comparing transumbilical laparoscopically assisted extracorporeal appendectomy in pediatric patients and young adults.
- Operative time, length of stay, and cost did not differ significantly between pediatric and young adult patients.
- No difference of infection rate or conversion to conventional appendectomy was noted between children and young adults.

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 29 August 2016

Received in revised form

29 October 2016

Accepted 1 November 2016

Available online 2 November 2016

Keywords:

Appendectomy

Appendicitis

Adult

Pediatric

Single port

Laparoscopic

ABSTRACT

Background: To compare surgical outcomes of pediatric patients aged 0–15 with acute appendicitis treated with single-port, transumbilical, extracorporeal laparoscopically assisted appendectomy (SP) with young adult patients aged 16–21.

Materials and methods: Single center retrospective chart review in patients 21 years and younger with a pre-operative diagnosis of appendicitis who underwent SP between January 2010 and December 2015. Patients were divided into two groups based on age. Operative time (OT), length of stay (LOS), cost, rates of conversion to standard three-port laparoscopic appendectomy (TP), and rates of infection were compared between the groups.

Results: SP was performed in a total of 263 patients: 211 in pediatric patients aged 0–15 and 52 in patients aged 16–21. Age groups did not differ significantly on cost, LOS, operative time, rates of conversion to TP, or rates of infection.

Conclusions: SP has comparable surgical outcomes in adolescent, adult, and pediatric patients.

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1. Introduction

Laparoscopic appendectomy was introduced by Semm in 1983 [1] and first performed for acute appendicitis by Schreiber in 1987 [2]. It has since replaced open appendectomy as the gold standard for the surgical treatment of appendicitis [1,3,4]. Within

laparoscopic techniques, different single-incision approaches for appendectomies have been described for the adult population [5–10]. Single port, transumbilical, extracorporeal laparoscopically assisted appendectomy (SP) is a single incision, single port technique, combining the advantages of laparoscopic and open appendectomy. The procedure was first performed in adults by Pelosi [11] and subsequently described in children by Begin [12]. SP is well-established in the pediatric population as an alternative surgical technique to conventional three-port laparoscopic appendectomy (TP) with intracorporeal appendiceal amputation. In pediatric patients, SP has demonstrated lower costs, shorter operative times, with improved cosmetic results compared to the conventional TP [13,14]. SP has been described as a viable treatment

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option in the adult population; however, it is still not commonly performed in North America [15–17].

There is significant heterogeneity in single-incision laparoscopic techniques, with few comparative studies describing a single port extracorporeal laparoscopically assisted appendectomy in adults. Furthermore, there have been a limited number of studies assessing the cost savings of SP in adults. The aim of this study is to determine whether SP in fully grown patients can achieve similarly improved operative times (OT), hospital lengths of stay (LOS), and cost savings already demonstrated in the pediatric population.

2. Materials & methods

Following approval by our institutional review board, a single center retrospective chart review was performed to identify patients undergoing TP or SP appendectomy between January 2010 and December 2015. All patients 21 years and younger with a pre-operative diagnosis of appendicitis were candidates. All procedures were performed by four pediatric surgeons at a tertiary referral center. Patients with a post-operative, histological diagnosis of acute, perforated, or gangrenous appendicitis, available BMI data, operative time (OT), length of stay (LOS), and available cost data were analyzed. Cases in which an appendectomy was not the sole procedure were excluded. A total of 625 appendectomies were performed in the study period of 2010–2015.

Patients undergoing SP were divided into two groups based on age: patients 0–15 years of age were defined as “pediatric” and patients 16–21 years old as fully grown or “adult”. Patients were not randomized to either SP or TP technique. Surgical technique was decided based on surgeon preference. Outcomes analyzed for each group included: OT in minutes (time of incision to time of dressing application), LOS in hours (post-anesthesia care unit discharge time to hospital discharge time), total cost of hospitalization in US dollars, surgical site infections with post-operative need for antibiotics (SSI), post-operative ileus (defined as no return of bowel function within two days), conversion from SP to conventional TP, and intra-operative complications such as vascular, urethral, or bowel injury.

This work has been reported in line with the STROBE criteria [18].

2.1. Operative technique for SP

All patients received preoperative antibiotics within an hour prior to incision. For the SP approach, the umbilicus is everted and a vertical intra-umbilical incision is made. Using the Hasson technique, an 11-mm Covidien STEP™ trocar (Covidien, Minneapolis, MN) is placed into the abdominal cavity. Capnoperitoneum to a pressure of 12–15 mmHg of CO₂ is established. The 10 mm, offset Storz operating laparoscope (Karl Storz Endoscopy-America, Inc., El Segundo, CA) is introduced and, if necessary, the cecum is mobilized using a blunt 5 mm grasper. The tip of the appendix is grasped, the capnoperitoneum released, and the appendix exteriorized through the umbilical incision. In cases of a severely inflamed or thickened appendix, the fascial defect is enlarged prior to exteriorization. The mesoappendix is clamped, ligated, and divided. The base of the appendix is doubly ligated with a long lasting polydioxanone suture and amputated extracorporeally. The mucosal stump is allowed to retract into the peritoneal cavity. Completion laparoscopy confirms correct position of the cecum, hemostasis, and proper seal of the appendiceal stump. The umbilical ring is closed using a figure-of-eight polyglactin suture and the umbilical skin approximated with simple interrupted absorbable monofilament. Bupivacaine is subcutaneously injected and a simple vacuum dressing is applied using gauze and a bio-occlusive film

[19]. SP operative technique was standard for all patients in the study regardless of age.

2.2. Statistical methods

BMI, age- and gender-adjusted BMI z-scores, percentiles, and percentage of 95th percentile of the age- and gender-adjusted BMI were computed for patients under the age of 20 years from the 2000 CDC growth charts using a program provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [20].

Data were described using medians and ranges for continuous variables, and counts and percentages for categorical variables. Age groups were compared on the continuous outcomes cost, length of stay (LOS) and operative time using Chi-square, Fisher's exact, and Wilcoxon rank sum tests as appropriate. Sample sizes for individual variables reflect missing data. All analyses were performed on a complete-case basis. All tests were two-tailed and performed at a significance level of 0.05. SAS 9.4 software (SAS Institute, Cary, NC) was used for all analyses.

3. Results

A total of 625 appendectomies were performed in the study period of 2010–2015. 362 were TP and 263 SP. Among the 362 TP appendectomies, 291 were patients aged 0–15 and 71 in patients aged 16–21. 263 SP appendectomies were performed among which 211 were in patients aged 0–15 and 52 in patients aged 16–21 (Table 1). Patients aged 16–21 were more likely to be female than patients 0–15 (58% vs 41%; $p = 0.028$). The older age group had a lower BMI-for-age percentile (median percentile 53 vs 67; $p = 0.032$). There were no significant differences in BMI or type of appendicitis between the two age groups.

Outcomes of OT, LOS, and cost did not differ significantly between the two SP groups. There were a total of 17 (8%) conversions from SP to TP in patients age 0–15 and 1 (2%) in the age 16–21 group, but did not reach statistical significance ($p = 0.12$). Among the 17 conversions in patients age 0–15, 12 were in cases of perforated or gangrenous appendicitis and 6 were in overweight or obese children. The single conversion in the age 16–21 group was for acute appendicitis in a normal weight patient. There were 13 (6%) surgical site infections in patients aged 0–15 and 4 (8%) in patients aged 16–21, also statistically insignificant ($p = 0.69$). All infections were superficial wound infections which resolved with a course of oral antibiotics and did not require IV antibiotics or surgical drainage.

No intraoperative complications, post-operative complications aside from the mentioned SSI, or post-operative ileus were encountered for any patients in the study. There were no conversions from SP to open technique. In addition, all patients were seen at four weeks for a routine post-operative visit and no incisional hernias were found.

4. Discussion

While the SP technique has been well-established in the pediatric population for the treatment of appendicitis, there have been a limited number of studies evaluating its use in an adult population. Possible concerns over increased technical difficulty of SP in adults, including larger peritoneal space with longer distance from appendix to umbilicus, larger abdominal wall, and increased intra-abdominal adhesions, may explain its limited application. Our single center experience using SP in patients aged 16–21 revealed no significant differences in OT, LOS, cost, SSI, or intraoperative complications compared to younger patients. Our subset of 16–21-year-old patients was selected to show comparable outcomes in

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