

Duration of vaginal packing after pelvic organ prolapse surgery

Ida Dahlgaard, Susanne Axelsen

Introduction: Pelvic organ prolapse (POP) surgery involves the use of postoperative vaginal packing to reduce complications such as bleeding. However, evidence supporting duration and efficacy of this practice is lacking. If it is patient safe to revise the current practice, by shortening the duration of vaginal packing, it may potentially reduce the hospitalization time and support early mobilization of the patients.

Aim: We wanted to evaluate the impact of duration of vaginal packing on postoperative bleeding, pain, and satisfaction after POP surgery.

Methods: Consecutively and prospectively, patients undergoing elective POP surgery were temporally randomized to receive vaginal packing for either one or two and three hours after the operation. Outcome measures included postoperative bleeding, pain, discomfort, and overall satisfaction assessed by using validated Likert-scale questionnaires completed by patients and nurses. Determination of the sample size of 79 patient in each group, was based on a power analysis.

Results: A total of 158 patients were included in the analysis. The two groups were comparable according to age, Body Mass Index and smoking habits. There was a significant difference between the groups receiving either one hour or two and three hours of packing, in terms of postoperative bleeding ($P = 0.04$), but no difference in pain, discomfort, or satisfaction. The median level of bleeding in the one-hour-packing group was significantly lower than the median level of bleeding in two/three-hour-packing group ($P = 0.02$). Both groups reported minimal bleeding, low levels of pain and discomfort, and high levels of satisfaction with the procedure. Overall, no severe postoperative bleeding incidences were observed.

Conclusion: This study shows that one hour of packing is sufficient to prevent postoperative bleeding and that one hour of packing led to less bleeding compared to two and three hours of packing. The duration of vaginal packing does not significantly impact other postoperative outcomes after POP surgery.

Without harming the patients, the duration of vaginal packing after POP surgery can be reduced to one hour.