Factors influencing the conversion of Laparoscopic to Open Cholecystectomy

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Abstract:

Introduction: The laparoscopic cholecystectomy provides advantages of less postoperative pain, shorter length of hospital stay, earlier return to routine activity, and decreases overall cost. However, a number of patients may require conversion to an open cholecystectomy for the safe completion of the procedure. The present study was commenced to identify the factors that contribute to conversion of laparoscopic cholecystectomy into open cholecystectomy which is important for the surgeon to understand for safety of the patient and successful completion of the procedure.

Material and Methods: This retrospective study was carried out on 100 patients who underwent a laparoscopic cholecystectomy for acute cholecystitis in our institute. Patients who underwent laparoscopic cholecystectomy and were required to conversion to open cholecystectomy were compared according to demographic details and ultrasound findings. Data so obtained was analyzed using SPSS Version-16 data analysis software. Chi square test was used for the analysis and a p-value of less than or equal to 0.05 was considered statistically significant.

Results: 27% patients had a chronically inflamed gallbladder and 73% patients had symptomatic gallstones but no obvious inflammation. Conversion to open cholecystectomy was seen in 28% patients, 19 male and 9 female (p value was significant with p<0.05) which includes 23% patients with chronic inflammation and 5% for patients with no inflammation. The reasons for conversion were revealed that inability to correctly identify anatomy (19%), increased thickness of gallbladder (11%), delayed surgeries after 78 hours (9%), biliary tract injuries (8%), fibrosis of liver parenchyma (5%) and dense adhesions to neighboring organs (3%).
**Conclusion:** Demographic details of the patient, ultrasonographic findings and operative data of patients who underwent laparoscopic cholecystectomy are important factors affecting conversion to open surgery and identifying these risk factors will help the surgeon to plan and counsel the patient for surgery accordingly.

**Keywords:** Cholelithiasis; Laparoscopic cholecystectomy

**Introduction**

Open cholecystectomy (OC) enjoyed the status of gold standard treatment for cholelithiasis till the late 1980s, when Philip Mouret from France performed the first human laparoscopic cholecystectomy (LC) in 1987. Just after 2 years of its introduction, the first LC was carried out in India by T. E. Udwadia in 1989. The laparoscopic cholecystectomy provides advantages of less postoperative pain, shorter length of hospital stay, earlier return to routine activity, and decreases overall cost. However, a number of patients may require conversion to an open cholecystectomy for the safe completion of the procedure. The present study was commenced to identify the factors that contribute to conversion of laparoscopic cholecystectomy into open cholecystectomy which is important for the surgeon to understand for safety of the patient and successful completion of the procedure.

**Material and Methods**

This retrospective study was carried out on prospective data obtained from 100 patients who underwent a laparoscopic cholecystectomy for acute cholecystitis in our institute. Ethical approval was taken from the concerned authority for the commencement of study. Patients who underwent laparoscopic cholecystectomy and were required to conversion to open cholecystectomy were compared according to demographic details that includes age, sex, BMI, fever, laboratory findings, co morbid diseases, history of previous acute attacks, time of surgery after symptom begin, ultrasound findings, complications and duration of hospital stay. Cholecystectomies were performed by experienced surgeons. All patients were placed on intravenous antibiotics upon admission which was continued after surgery. Data so obtained was analyzed using SPSS Version-16 data analysis software. Chi square test was used for the analysis and a p-value of less than or equal to 0.05 was considered statistically significant.
Results:
Total 100 patients with acute cholecystitis, 36 male and 64 female patients, with a mean age of 49.6 years (range 20 to 78 years) were included in the study. Laparoscopic surgery was carried out and all the operations were carried out or assisted by the same surgeons. 27% patients had a chronically inflamed gallbladder and 73% patients had symptomatic gallstones but no obvious inflammation. Conversion to open cholecystectomy was seen in 28% patients, 19 male and 9 female (p value was significant with p<0.05) which includes 23% patients with chronic inflammation and 5% for patients with no inflammation (table 1). Thus, the conversion rate in the presence of inflammation was significant compared to cases without inflammation.

Patients with abnormal liver function test and leukocyte count showed higher rate of conversion to open surgery (value was significantly higher with p<0.05). Thirty-nine patients had >35 BMI and were considered obese, out of which 16 were converted to open surgery, 61 patients had <35 BMI and were considered non-obese, out of which 12 were converted to open surgery (p-value was non-significant with p> 0.05). The reasons for conversion were revealed that inability to correctly identify anatomy (19%), increased thickness of gallbladder (11%), delayed surgeries after 78 hours (9%), biliary tract injuries (8%), fibrosis of liver parenchyma (5%) and dense adhesions to neighbouring organs (3%) (table 2).
### Table 1: Patient findings and their relation to conversion laparoscopic cholecytectomy to open surgery

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Risk Factors for conversion of Laparoscopic Cholecytectomy to open surgery</th>
<th>Number of patients in which Laparoscopic Cholecytectomy was converted to open surgery= 28</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male patients</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>&lt;0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female patients</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chronic inflammation</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>&lt;0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abnormal liver function test</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>&lt;0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abnormal leukocyte count</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>&lt;0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obese patients</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>&gt;0.05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 2: Reasons for conversion to open surgery

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons for conversion to open surgery</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inability to correctly identify anatomy</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased thickness of gallbladder</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biliary tract injuries</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delayed surgery after 72 hour of gall bladder inflammation</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fibrosis of liver parenchyma</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dense adhesions to neighbouring organs</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Discussion
Conversion rate was found significantly higher in patients with history of fever, older age, abnormal leukocyte count, delayed surgery after symptoms and history of previous acute attacks. The most common reason for conversion is the disability to correctly identify the anatomy of Calot’s triangle. Cox MR et al\(^4\) prospectively assessed the results of laparoscopic cholecystectomy in patients with acute inflammation of the gallbladder and revealed that patients require conversion to open operation compared to those with no obvious inflammation and suggested that once this diagnosis is made, excessive time should not be spent in laparoscopic trial dissection before converting to an open operation. Bingener-Casey J et al\(^3\) investigated about how the etiology and incidence of conversion from laparoscopic to open cholecystectomy has changed over time and reported that although unclear anatomy secondary to inflammation remains the most common reason for conversion, the impact of acute cholecystitis on the operative outcome has decreased with time. Eldar S et al\(^5\) determined the indications for and the optimal timing of laparoscopic cholecystectomy following the onset of acute cholecystitis, 28% needed conversion to open cholecystectomy and found that patients over 65 years of age, with a history of biliary disease, a nonpalpable gallbladder, WBC count over 13,000/cc, and acute gangrenous cholecystitis were independently associated with a high LC conversion rate. Ibrahim S et al\(^6\) determined risk factors for conversion to open surgery in patients undergoing laparoscopic cholecystectomy and found that the significant risk factors for conversion were male gender, advanced age (> 60 years), higher body weight > 65 kg, acute cholecystitis, previous upper abdominal surgery, junior surgeons, and diabetes associated with Hba1c > 6. Kanaan SA et al\(^7\) identified risk factors associated with conversion of LC to OC and reported that risk factors such as older men, presence of cardiovascular disease, male gender, acute cholecystitis, and severe inflammation are determined preoperatively, permitting the surgeon to better inform patients about the conversion risk from LC to OC. Simopoulos C et al\(^8\) reported male gender, age older than 60 years, previous upper abdominal surgery, diabetes, and severity of inflammation were all significantly correlated with an increased conversion rate to laparotomy.
Conclusion
Demographic details of the patient, ultrasonographic findings and operative data of patients who underwent laparoscopic cholecystectomy are important factors affecting conversion to open surgery and identifying these risk factors will help the surgeon to plan and counsel the patient for surgery accordingly.

References
This original research work was conducted by Dr. Satish Kumar Bansal, Assistant Professor, Department of General Surgery, Maharaja Agrasen Medical College, Agroha, Haryana, India.

Conflict of Interest: Nil, Source of Support: Nil.
Date of submission: 25 October 2010
Date of Provisional acceptance: 08 Nov 2010
Date of final acceptance: 12 December 2010
Date of Publication: 21 December 2011