The strategies of perioperative management in orthopedic department during the pandemic of COVID-19

Hui Zeng (zenghui_36@163.com)  
Peaking University Shenzhen Hospital  
https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6966-0769

Guoqing Li  
Peking University Shenzhen Hospital

Jian Weng  
Peking University Shenzhen Hospital

Ao Xiong  
Peking University Shenzhen Hospital

Chang Xu  
Peking University Shenzhen Hospital

Yifei Yang  
Peking University Shenzhen Hospital

Deli Wang  
Peking University Shenzhen Hospital

Research article

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Abstract

**Background:** Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) broke out and spread rapidly nationwide at the beginning of 2020, which has brought huge impacts to people and work. The current situation of prevention and control is severe and urgent guidance for clinicians, especially for the medical systems. In the hope of providing a reference and recommendation for the prevention and control of the COVID-19, we carried out research to improve the quality of patients care and prevention during this epidemic.

**Methods:** All of the involved health care personnel were rapidly trained to use personal protection equipment in our department. The managements of the surgery patients and association of two periods were described and analyzed. We reviewed and compared the patients’ discharged records in our database who underwent surgery in the Department of Bone & Joint Surgery at Peking University Shenzhen Hospital, who were discharged between January 1st to March 1st in 2019 and January 1st to March 1st in 2020. Both chi-squared test and Student’s t-test were performed to determine the relationship between the two periods.

**Results:** Analysis revealed that gender, class and duration of surgery, and anaesthetization had no significantly differences between two periods ($p > 0.05$). However, age and blood loss had significant relationship of the two periods ($p < 0.05$).

**Conclusions:** The results of the study imply that we have been benefited from the strict flow charts in management of perioperative for orthopedic patients, which could be a valid tool in routine clinical practice and a consultation for clinicians during pandemic of the COVID-19.

Introduction

Since December 2019, unexplained type of coronavirus has appeared rapidly in Wuhan followed by bronchitis and pneumonia [1, 2]. It has been proven that the pathogen was Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), which seriously threatens surgical staff and patients, challenged the medical community to an unprecedented degree [3]. COVID-19 can induce not only mild to severe respiratory diseases, but also inflammation, high fever, cough, acute respiratory tract infection, and dysfunction of internal organs which may result in death [4]. The World Health Organization (WHO) declared it was a pandemic on 11 March 2020 because of its rapid worldwide spread [5]. The public health emergency caused by the pandemic has resulted in a significant reallocation of health resources with a consequent reorganization of the clinical activities in orthopedic department.

As secondary transmissions have occurred and the speed of transmission is accelerating, there are rising concerns about community infections and the overwhelming majority of cities have launched higher level response [6, 7]. The current prevention and control about the situation are grim.

Medical staff in our department make every effort in making correct diagnosis and treatment of specialized diseases by optimizing treatment process, providing proper medical advice, mastering
indications of selective, confine, and emergency operation reasonably. In the hope of providing a reference and recommendation for the prevention and control for surgeons, we share our experience during the epidemic in the form of flow charts.

**Study sample and patients**

We built a dataset containing 96 surgery patients who underwent operation between January 1st to March 1st of 2019 and January 1st to March 1st of 2020. Data were sourced retrospectively from the medical records. Each discharged abstract involved a multitude of variables. Characteristics of the patients were described and analyzed. Ethical review approval was obtained from the Human Subject Committee at Ethics Committee of Peking University Shenzhen Hospital (Ethics Committee of Peking University Shenzhen Hospital (research) [2020] 013th).

**Methods**

We searched the literature and assessed the certainty in the evidence using the recommendations based on the experience of health care systems in Asia and Europe, and recommendations were in the form of best clinical practice. Reasonable treatment strategies were changed and adopt timely to minimize the adverse effects on the treatment of orthopedic patients during the epidemic.

We reviewed many variables note in the literature and a set of recommendations and flow charts were created based on a review of the literatures and communications for surgeons with knowledge of safety procedures. We recommend inpatients during hospital stay should be provided with as many instructions as possible to stay in wards. Patients should be evaluated in details under stable condition to minimize the risk of readmission. It is advisable for us to reduce or reschedule post-discharge controls and implement an adequate system of communication for telemonitoring patients in order to reduce hospital visits.

**Statistics analysis**

Both chi-squared test and Student's t-test were performed to determine the relationship between the two periods. $p < 0.05$ were considered statistically significant. All statistical analyses were performed on IBM SPSS Statistics (version 23.0).

**Practical flow charts**

By summarizing the research progress and guidelines in recent years in the fields of orthopedic diseases, treatment strategies, and perioperative management were developed to provide more choices for patients to obtain the best treatment under the severe epidemic. COVID-19 brought huge impacts to people and work nationwide, the routine diagnosis and treatment of fractured patients was affected with varied degrees as well.
Instead of traditional diagnosis and treatment, a new system should be developed. Simplification of the diagnostic and staging pathway has to be prioritized in order to reduce hospital visits and consequently the risk of contagion. Orthopedic is not a front-line subject but fracture is a common injury and most of the patients are in trouble when diagnosed during the epidemic [8, 9]. The regular diagnosis and treatment of patients were greatly affected and elective surgical activity of the hospital was rapidly reduced.

Some of orthopedics have agreed on possible strategies for the reorganization of orthopedic routine practice and on a set of recommendations that should facilitate the process of rescheduling both inpatient and outpatient activities during the pandemic and in the subsequent phases. Meanwhile, we hope that it could provide more treatment model schemes for colleagues and share the flow charts of managements for patients during the breakout of epidemic, including prevention and control measures for medical staff, operation rooms and surgical instruments, which may be beneficial for medical staff (Fig.1). Meanwhile, we prepared measures for patients who were diagnosed with COVID-19 or the results of nucleic acid were positive (Fig.2)

Moreover, most of parts were involved during the special epidemic. As parts of epidemic response measures, the selection of surgical procedures and perioperative managements of orthopedic diseases require all staff work together to figure out a reasonable system of surgical treatment and emergent response. We concluded experience as followings and shared the experiences of the management of patients who are scheduled or emergent to be admitted (Fig. 3).

Some of the surgeons and assistants who come from outside of Shenzhen but ought to enter the OR should obey the special flow chart as well (Fig. 4).

Robots transport sterile materials in the OR without touch (Fig. 5a) and intraoperative photo of selective surgery of total knee arthroplasty (TKA) (Fig. 5b).

**Results**

Analysis revealed that gender, surgery class, duration of the surgery, and anaesthetization had no significantly differences between two periods ($p\geq0.05$). However, age and blood loss had significant relationship of the two periods ($p<0.05$) (Table 1).
Table 1 Analysis of surgery patients between the two periods (N=96)

| Factors       | Categories | 2019   | 2020   | $t/c^2$ Value | $p$ Value |
|---------------|------------|--------|--------|---------------|-----------|
| Age           | Year       | 61.48  | 52.11  | 2.346         | 0.021     |
| Gender        | Male       | 22     | 23     | 0.346         | 0.556     |
|               | Female     | 28     | 23     |               |           |
| Surgery class | 1          | 1      | 7      | 7.641         | 0.054     |
|               | 2          | 0      | 1      |               |           |
|               | 3          | 38     | 26     |               |           |
|               | 4          | 11     | 12     |               |           |
| Blood loss    | ml         | 131.94 | 22.91  | 5.503         | $<$0.001  |
| Duration      | min        | 205.9  | 201.3  | 0.289         | 0.773     |
| Anaesthetization | General | 21     | 11     | 3.527         | 0.060     |
|               | Non-general| 29     | 35     |               |           |

ASA: American Society of Anesthesiologists

We can tell from the results of the two periods, both age and blood loss had reduced than the former year ($p \leq 0.05$). The individuals were advised to stay at home because of the pandemic, which was helpful to reduce the chance of injured. What’s more, the reduce of blood loss may be explained from patients age. And therefore, the management of peri-operation for the young patients is much easier than before when it was compared to the aged patient.

Discussion

COVID-19 could result in killing quantities of people and resources have been appropriately allocated towards combating this outbreak and the current situation of prevention and control is severe. All of the involved health care personnel were rapidly trained to use personal protection equipment. Critical patients often occur in the elder with multiple comorbidities or lack of health care, which could progress to acute respiratory distress syndrome (ARDS), multi-organ dysfunction (MODS), or even death [10, 11]. Furthermore, besides clinical activities, continuously important research projects were carried out to explore new strategies and effective therapies to face the epidemic.
The epidemic of COVID-19 poses new challenges to diagnosis and treatment of the patients with orthopedic diseases [12]. We medical workers bearing important responsibilities and pressure through strict management strategy during the epidemic. Orthopedic surgeons performed the superiority of accurate diagnosis and treatment for patients, summarized how to carry out the clinical practice of orthopedic surgery under the situation of the prevention and control of the COVID-19, and minimized the risk of infection exposure.

It is particularly important to underline the clinical features of COVID-19, especially in the early stage of the illness. Up to now, multiple guidelines have been issued by various organizations to recommend their practice. In relationship with orthopedic diseases during the epidemic, related prevention and control, clinical recommendations, diagnosis and treatment, clinical management, healthcare personnel protection and disinfection were applied soon in our hospital.

Responses to national recommendations, local infection control guidelines and tailored to the availability of medical resources are imminently adopted to against the pandemic [13, 14]. Laura et believe that anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) may induce increased sensitivity to more severe clinical features in coronavirus infection [15]. The Department of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery of Peking University School and Hospital of Stomatology shared their experience [16]. Luo introduced details of Renji experience as for parts of general surgery [17]. Italian urologists recommended on pathways of perioperative care for urological patients undergoing urgent procedures, which may be inspired for urological societies [18]. Anesthesiologists are required to adopt tailor anesthetic practices to individual patients will ensure the best outcomes [19]. Former researchers provide the views of related diseases and they believed that strategies were suitable for physicians, which is good for both patients and the perioperative management team.

Based on the fully understanding of the characteristics of orthopedics diseases and COVID-19, In order to summarize and discuss available evidence for orthopedic practices, we provide the highest quality medical services in the form of flow charts as for the regular clinical practice.

The healthcare personnel of department of orthopedics are vulnerable to the infection due to their extensive and close exposure to patients. In consideration of the rapid spread of epidemic, health care staff are at added risk of exposure and infection during the practice of treatment [20]. To reduce the number of people in the hospital, physio-therapy should be provided only to immediate postoperative patients [21]. The treatment strategy should be changed timely and appropriate methods should be adopted to minimize the adverse effect of the epidemic in orthopedics diseases’ treatment.

It is still a difficult task how to maximize the protection for health of medical staff, and the safety of wards and hospitals. In our study, no one of medical staff was infected during the clinical practice. Preserving a highly skilled health care workforce is a top priority for any community and health care system. To avoid the aggravation of COVID-19 or collapse of the health system, emergency department was emphasized in our hospital and several recommendations were issued to help support healthcare workers against the pandemic.
There are several limitations in our study. First, we conducted this retrospective cohort study by using a database in our department within two years, particularly with new generation constructs. Prospective studies are needed to validate these calculators and refine over time. Moreover, the database was small and did not include information on long-term follow-up outcomes. Last but not least, the provided flow charts, which may evolve over time, could be used as guidance for health care workers who are involved in the care of patients. When available, we will provide new evidence in further releases of these guidelines and we believe that future studies are necessary to define more flow charts briefly and clearly.

Conclusion

By following strict safety guidelines and adopting flow charts strictly, the risk of exposure and infection of health care workers and patients could be greatly reduced. Our results indicate that patients and medical staff in our department were influenced little with the help of flow charts above during the pandemic of COVID-19. Meanwhile, the flow charts could be valid tools in routine clinical practice. What's more, the provided flow charts, which may evolve over time, could be used as guidance for orthopedic peers.

Abbreviations

BRT: blood routine examination; CCT: chest Computed Tomography; MDT: multidisciplinary diagnosis and treatment model; COVID-19: Coronavirus disease 2019; OR: operation room; ID card: Identification Card; TKA: total knee arthroplasty; ASA: American Society of Anesthesiologists; NSAIDs: anti-inflammatory drugs; ARDS: respiratory distress syndrome; MODS: multi-organ dysfunction.

Declarations

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Authors’ contributions

Guoqing Li and Jian Weng prepared the manuscript. Yifei Yang collected and inputted the data. Chang Xu carried out the statistical analysis. Ao Xiong assisted with the revision of the manuscript. Deli Wang and Hui Zeng initiated and designed the study. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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Availability of data and materials
Please contact the author for data requests.

**Ethics approval and consent to participate**

Ethical review approval was obtained from the Human Subject Committee at Ethics Committee of Peking University Shenzhen Hospital (Ethics Committee of Peking University Shenzhen Hospital (research) [2020] 013th).

**Consent for publication**

Not applicable.

**Conflict of interest statement**

All of the authors of this paper have disclosed potential or pertinent conflicts of interest, which may include receipt of payment, either direct or indirect, institutional support, or association with an entity in the biomedical field which may be perceived to have potential conflict of interest with the submitted article. Each author certifies that his or her institution approved the human protocol for this investigation and that all investigations were conducted in conformity with ethical principles of research. This work was performed at the Department of Bone and Joint Surgery, Peking University Shenzhen Hospital, Shenzhen, People's Republic of China.

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**Figures**

Suspected patients: Epidemiology history (↑) / Respiratory symptoms / BRT / CCT (↑) ⇒ 2

Patients: Medical isolation in single room with surgical mask
Medical staff: Medical secondary protection

Inform the director of department and nurse / examine nucleic acid / BRT / CCT / submit to COVID-19 expert group for MDT

Inform department of medical / nurse / hospital infection

Vital signs stable?
Easy to be transported?

Yes: Check the CCT and finish sampling in special department

No: Professional staff sampling in the ward

Diagnose according to results of nucleic acid / CCT / other examination with proper protection

Negative: Symptomatic treatment and medical observation
Positive: Transport to designated hospital
Figure 1

Suspected patient identification

Suspected patient nucleic acid test (+)

Inform the director of department and nurse

Inform department of medical / nursing / director of administration

Inform department of general services and security / department of electrical and mechanical / arrange the special elevator for transportation

Implement secondary protection in the designated ward / Confirm surgical mask and protective suit of the patient

Transport the patient with negative pressure ambulance to the designated hospital

The transported bed and ward are disinfected according to the requirement

Figure 2

Patient who were identified positive for nucleic acid test
Figure 3

Surgery management for inpatients
Figure 4

Managements for visitors

Figure 5
Transport robot (a) and intraoperative photo (b)