The evaluation of decision-to-delivery interval in category-1 emergency cesarean section: a report of six cases

Atsushi Kotera*

Abstract

Background: In category-1 emergency cesarean section, decision-to-delivery interval (DDI) is an important indicator for evaluating the quality of maternity care. I thus evaluated DDI and neonatal outcome in category-1 emergency cesarean section in our institution.

Case presentation: I collected data from the six patients undergoing category-1 emergency cesarean section performed between October 1, 2019, and December 31, 2021. The average age and gestational age were 32 years old (range, 21–42) and 34 weeks (range, 26–40), respectively. Three patients suffered from abruptio placenta and the others fetal distress. All the surgeries were performed under general anesthesia, and the average DDI was 21 min (range, 10–29). The morality was 25% in neonates whose gestational ages of >35 weeks, and that was 67% in neonates whose gestational ages of <27 weeks.

Conclusions: DDI was achieved within 30 min in all the patients, and the mortality of neonate might depend on gestational age.

Keywords: Category-1 emergency cesarean section, Decision-to-delivery interval, General anesthesia

Background

When the cesarean section (C/S) is done urgently for an immediate life-threatening condition of the fetus or mother, it is defined as category-1 emergency C/S [1], and guidelines recommend that decision-to-delivery interval (DDI) should be within 30 min [2]. DDI is an important indicator for evaluating the quality of maternity care [3]; however, in real clinical settings, to achieve DDI within 30 min is challenging. This study was aimed to evaluate DDI and neonatal outcome in category-1 emergency C/S in our institution.

Patients and methods

Patients

The approval for this study (approval no.605) was provided by Ethical Committee of Kumamoto City Hospital, Kumamoto, Japan, on January 19, 2022. Patients who underwent category-1 emergency C/S performed between October 1, 2019, and December 31, 2021, were eligible for this study. I published the details of this study on the homepage of Kumamoto City Hospital (Opt-out method).

Data collection

Data were collected from the medical charts. Concerning a pregnant woman, I extracted age, gestation age, gravidity, height, weight, indication for C/S, single or twin pregnancy, underlying co-morbidities, inpatient or outpatient, and outcome. I also extracted the times of request for transfer to our institution, arrival at our institution, decision for C/S, arrival at the operating theater, start of the surgery, delivery of the neonate, end of the surgery, DDI, intraoperative blood loss, fluid infusion, and urine output. Concerning a neonate, I extracted fetal heart rate (FHR) on the arrival at our institution, Apgar score, weight, arterial cord blood tests, and outcome.
Obstetric emergency call system in our institution

Our obstetric emergency call system is shown (Fig. 1). One obstetrician and one pediatrician are on duty in our hospital on a 24-h basis. However, another obstetrician, one anesthesiologist, and two operating-theater nurses are on-call duty, and they are not necessarily present in our hospital on a 24-h basis. When a transfer of a patient is requested from the other hospital to the obstetrician being on duty, the obstetrician calls anesthesiologist, another obstetrician, and operating-theater nurses who are on call as early as possible. Our goal is that the staffs being on-call can arrive at our hospital before a patient is coming to our hospital, and an over- triage is permitted in our call system.

Results

During the study period, six cases of category-1 emergency C/S were undergone. Their clinical characteristics were shown in Table 1. The average age was 32 years old (range, 21–42), and the average gestational age was 34 weeks (range, 26–40). Three patients had abruptio placentae and the others fetal distress. One patient is pregnant with twins. The average FHR on the arrival at our institution was 71 beats/min (range, 0–120). One patient was inpatient and the others were outpatients.

The time course and surgical data were shown in Table 2. The four patients received the surgery at daytime, and the other two patients at nighttime. The average DDI was 21 min (range, 10–29). Maternal surgical complications did not occur, and they were discharged within the 9th postoperative day.

The clinical characteristics and outcomes of the seven neonates were shown in Table 3. The mortality was 25% in the four neonates whose gestational ages of >35 weeks, and that was 67% in the three neonates whose gestational ages of <27 weeks. Except for one stillbirth, data of the residual six neonates were presented. Median 1st and 5th minute Apgar score was 1.5 (range, 1–3) and 2.5 (range, 2–6), respectively. The arterial cord blood analysis showed acidosis in the four neonates, and in the three of them, pH, base excess, and HCO$_3^-$ could not be measured accurately because of their too low values.

Discussion

I considered that several factors might contribute to the achievement of the 30-min goal in all the subjects. First, one operating room was always kept empty for undergoing an obstetric emergency surgery. Second, preoperative written informed consent was skipped. Third, a simulation training for category-1 emergency C/S was held regularly, and we discussed the shortest route for transferring a patient to the operating theater. Fourth, human resources were available immediately. In our subjects, four patients received the surgery at daytime and two received at nighttime. It is noted that category-1 emergency C/S performed in the daytime had a statistically shorter DDI when compared with the nighttime (odds ratio=2.49, 95% confidence interval=1.26–4.92) [4]. Fortunately, the two patients received nighttime surgery were transferred to our institution soon after the other emergency surgery completed, and human resources were thus available easily. Fifth, general anesthesia was selected. Patients who received general anesthesia were 4 times more likely to achieve the 30-min goal than those who received regional anesthesia (odds ratio=4.0, 95% confidence interval=1.6–10.0) [4]. On the other hand,
the use of general anesthesia for category-1 emergency C/S was 74.3% after the COVID-19 pandemic, which was significantly lower than that before the COVID-19 pandemic, at 86.6% (p value=0.037) [5]. The use of regional anesthesia increased significantly to decrease the risk of COVID-19 transmission to health care workers [5]. Furthermore, median DDI after and before the COVID-19 pandemic was 27 min and 26 min, respectively, and the difference was significant (p value=0.043) but was a little [5]. The appropriate anesthetic management in category-1 emergency cesarean section is controversial.

It is noted that DDI of <30 min does not always improve the neonatal outcomes [6]. The odds ratios (95% confidence intervals) on the incidence of adverse neonatal outcome were as follows: DDI, 0.957 (0.906–1.012); birthweight, 1.000 (1.0–1.001); male sex of newborn, 1.132 (0.744–1.722); diabetes mellitus or gestational diabetes, 0.791 (0.354–1.766); and

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### Table 1 The clinical characteristics in the six patients

| Case number | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|-------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Age (years) | 36 | 22 | 34 | 35 | 42 | 21 |
| Gestational age in week | 35 | 39 | 37 | 40 | 26 | 27 |
| Gravidity | Primigravida | Primigravida | Primigravida | Primigravida | Primigravida | Primigravida |
| Height (cm) | 147 | 157 | 148 | 161 | 160 | 147 |
| Weight (kg) | 77 | 78 | 61 | 54 | 44 | 48 |
| Indication for C/S | Abruptio placenta | Abruptio placenta | Fetal distress | Abruptio placenta | Fetal distress | Fetal distress |
| Single or twin pregnancy | Single | Single | Single | Single | Single | Twin |
| FHR on arrival at our institution (beats/min) | 110 | 22 | 64 | 88 | 90 | 120 (I) |

### Table 2 The time course and surgical data of the six patients

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6-1 | 6-2 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|-----|-----|
| **Time course** | | | | | | | |
| Request for transfer to my institution | 18:59 | 11:40 | – | 7:45 | 8:40 | 22:20 |
| Arrival at my institution | 19:42 | 12:02 | – | 8:26 | 9:40 | 23:14 |
| Decision for cesarean section | 19:42 | 12:02 | 8:25 | 8:26 | 9:40 | 23:14 |
| Arrival at the operation theater | 19:57 | 12:05 | 8:45 | 8:39 | 9:52 | 23:22 |
| Start of the operation | 20:08 | 12:12 | 8:53 | 8:42 | 9:58 | 23:31 |
| Delivery of the neonate | 20:11 | 12:12 | 8:54 | 8:42 | 10:06 | 23:32 |
| End of the operation | 21:08 | 13:06 | 9:42 | 9:36 | 11:04 | 00:03 |
| DDI (min) | 29 | 10 | 29 | 16 | 26 | 18 |
| Surgical data | | | | | | | |
| Surgical duration (min) | 60 | 54 | 49 | 54 | 66 | 32 |
| Intraoperative blood loss including amniotic fluid (ml) | 876 | 1274 | 904 | 746 | 742 | 590 |
| Fluid infusion (ml) | 1600 | 2000 | 1020 | 2210 | 1300 | 550 |
| Urine output (ml) | 30 | 700 | 310 | 250 | 0 | 390 |
| Maternal surgical complications | – | – | – | – | – | – |
| Discharge date of the mother | 9th POD | 5th POD | 6th POD | 6th POD | 4th POD | 7th POD |

**DDI** Decision-to-delivery interval, **POD** Postoperative day
gestational age, 0.869 (0.783–0.964) [7]. Indeed, in my study, the mortality in the neonates whose gestational ages of <27 weeks was higher compared to that in the neonates whose gestational ages of >35 weeks.

Furthermore, among the three patients with abruptio placenta, one neonate died despite the shortest DDI. In this case, abruptio placenta occurred during the induced labor, by using uterotonic agents and the fetal condition was nearly cardiac arrest. When abruptio placenta occurs, the neonatal mortality is reported to be approx. 30% [8], and the prognosis may depend on the severity of abruptio placenta rather than DDI.

The incidence of 5th minute Apgar score of <7 in the case of DDI was >60 min was 58.3%, which was significantly higher than that in the case of DDI was <30 min at 1.9% [9]. In my subjects, 5th minute Apgar score was <7; nevertheless, the 30-min goal was achieved. The cause is unknown; however, the average interval between request for the transfer of a patient and delivery of the neonate was 65 min (range, 32–87), which might be associated with the low 5th minute Apgar score. I thus consider that trying to shorten the time for transferring a patient is our future task to be solved.

### Conclusion

DDI in category-1 emergency C/S was achieved within 30 min in all the patients, and the mortality of neonate might depend on gestational age.

### Abbreviations

C/S: Cesarean section; DDI: Decision-to-delivery interval; FHR: Fetal heart rate.

### Acknowledgements

I thank the staff members of the Department of Gynecological Surgery, Kumamoto City Hospital who participated in the surgical procedure of the reported patients. I also thank the staff members of the Department of Anesthesiology, Kumamoto City Hospital who participated in the anesthetic management of the reported patients.

### Author’s contributions

AK participated in the anesthetic management. AK drafted the manuscript and approved the final manuscript.

### Funding

No funding was used for this study.

### Availability of data and materials

The datasets analyzed during this study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

### Declarations

#### Ethics approval and consent to participate

Approval for this case report (approval no.605) was provided by the Ethical Committee of Kumamoto City Hospital, Kumamoto, Japan, on January 19, 2022.

#### Consent for publication

All data were pre-existing data obtained from the patient’s medical records and did not include any personal information that would identify any of the patients.

#### Competing interests

The author declares no competing interests.

Received: 28 January 2022 Revised: 6 April 2022 Accepted: 15 April 2022 Published online: 26 April 2022

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