Effects of Partial Nephrectomy on Postoperative Blood Pressure

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**Purpose:** The effects of partial nephrectomy (PN) on postoperative blood pressure (BP) are not known, and PN has the potential to worsen BP. We therefore sought to determine whether PN alters postoperative BP.

**Materials and Methods:** Patients who underwent PN for suspected malignancy at our institution from 2002 to 2008 were included. Data on BP and medication from before and after PN were retrieved from family physicians. BP and number of anti-hypertensive medications were compared after surgery with preoperative values by use of paired t tests and Chi-squared analyses, respectively.

**Results:** Of 74 patients undergoing PN and providing consent, 48 met the inclusion and exclusion criteria, with a median follow-up of 24 months. For the early postoperative period (1 month to 1 year after surgery), the mean BPs (132.3/77.0 mmHg) were unchanged compared with preoperative values (132.4/78.0 mmHg; p=0.59 systolic BP and p=0.30 diastolic BP). For the later postoperative period (beyond 1 year after surgery), the mean postoperative systolic BP was unchanged from the mean preoperative systolic BP (131.2 mmHg vs. 132.4 mmHg, respectively; p > 0.30). However, the corresponding average diastolic BP was lower in the long term (78.0 mmHg versus 76.4 mmHg respectively; p=0.01). No significant difference in the mean number of BP medications prescribed preoperatively, at one year, and beyond one year was identified (p > 0.37).

**Conclusions:** PN does not result in initial or long-term postoperative deterioration in BP.

**Key Words:** Blood pressure; Hypertension, Kidney cancer; Kidney failure; Partial nephrectomy
pertension in the short term [11-13]. One older small series of 14 patients showed no long-term deterioration of blood pressure (BP) after PN in patients with a solitary kidney, although that study did not include comparison of postoperative BP with preoperative BP [14]. The renal trauma literature suggests that renal injury can lead to postoperative hypertension in the form of renal vascular injuries or the often mentioned “Page kidney” after renal repair [15-17]. The donor transplant nephrectomy literature has conflicting studies with respect to the loss of renal mass on BP, with some showing a high incidence of hypertension after surgery [18,19] and one older study showing a minimal effect on long-term BP [20]. The importance of hypertension with respect to renal preservation is highlighted by a recent study identifying it as an independent risk factor for renal loss in radical and partial nephrectomies [7].

Therefore, the effect of PN for renal masses on postoperative BP is important for clinical follow-up and is not well defined.

The hypothesis suggesting that PN can induce a postoperative hypertensive response as a consequence of renin-angiotensin activation appears plausible. Therefore, our aim was to initiate an exploratory study to describe the effect of PN on short- and long-term postoperative BP.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

1. Patient recruitment and data collection

A single-center, ethics-approved retrospective review of all PNs performed over 6 years (2002 to 2008) was conducted at the Queen Elizabeth II Health Sciences Center, Department of Urology in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada. The 6-year cut-off was selected because before this time period, PN was not a common procedure. Consent forms and explanatory cover letters were mailed to all 112 consecutive patients originally identified, and 74 provided informed consent. Of the 74 family physician offices contacted, 62 released information on BP and medications. Other patient information was also obtained from electronic and paper health records.

The inclusion criteria were patients ≥18 years of age, who underwent PN for presumed renal cell carcinoma, and who were followed by a family physician and had at least two BP readings taken during the 2 years before surgery and at least two BP measurements taken >1 month after surgery. The initial postoperative period was excluded to avoid effects of postoperative pain and anxiety on BP. Preoperative BP data were generated before patients were diagnosed with a renal cancer, thereby excluding anxiety-induced BP alterations. We excluded patients if consent was not given for information release or if insufficient BP information was available (less than two readings before or after surgery). Patients on dialysis within 2 years of surgery were excluded, thus eliminating the complexity of dialysis-related BP variability. Patients pregnant within 2 years before or after surgery were excluded. Patients with metastatic renal cancer within 2 years before or after surgery were excluded, because associated pain, anxiety, and paraneoplastic syndromes could complicate results. Patients with chronic renal failure (creatinine clearance <20 ml/h) and patients with greater than one renal surgery were also excluded. Of 62 patients available before exclusions, 10 had insufficient BP information, 2 developed early metastatic disease, 1 developed kidney failure, and 1 had bilateral kidney surgeries.

2. Study endpoints

The main study variables assessed were mean systolic BP (SBP) and diastolic BP (DBP). The mean SBPs and DBPs were calculated separately before and after surgery. Unfortunately, owing to the retrospective nature of this study, we could not control for the temporal variability of BP readings before and after surgery. Therefore, BP's taken during the 2-year period before surgery were averaged, whereas the mean of BP's taken after surgery was stratified by the early postoperative period (1-12 months) and the late postoperative period (12 months to the end of follow-up). The secondary endpoint assessed was the mean number of BP medications used before (at the last family physician office visit before surgery) and after surgery. Postoperative BP medication tallies were also subdivided into the early and delayed postoperative period as above, with the number of medications at the last family physician visit closest to 1 year postoperatively and those at the last follow-up incorporated into our analysis. The number of patients taking angiotensin-converting enzyme inhibitors (ACEI) or angiotensin receptor blockers (ARB) was compared independent of other medications.

3. Statistical analysis

Differences between mean SBPs and DBPs before and after surgery were analyzed with a paired t test. A p-value of <0.05 was considered statistically significant. Medication comparisons from before and after surgery were analyzed by using a chi-squared test. Statistical analysis was performed with GraphPad Prism ver. 4.01 (GraphPad Software Inc., La Jolla, CA, USA).

RESULTS

The characteristics of the patient cohort are summarized in Table 1. The overall mean preoperative SBP/DBP was 132.4/78.0 mmHg and when compared with the overall postoperative BP (132.2/76.7 mmHg) was not significantly different (p=0.87 for systolic and p=0.16 for diastolic). Table 2 shows the comparison of preoperative BP with BP in the early postoperative period (1 month-1 year) and the late postoperative period (>1 year). No significant difference was found in diastolic or systolic BP when preoperative measurements were compared with measurements in the early postoperative period (p>0.3). Assessment of late postsurgery BP (>12 months after surgery) identified no significant difference in mean SBP compared with before surgery, with a median follow-up time of 24
TABLE 1. Patient cohort characteristics

| Variable                                      | Value               |
|------------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| Number of patients analyzed, N (%)            |                     |
| Total                                         | 48 (100)            |
| Female                                        | 17 (35)             |
| Male                                          | 31 (65)             |
| Median age in years (range)                   | 63 (28-78)          |
| Post-op follow-up                             |                     |
| Median in months (range)                      | 24 (2-72)           |
| Mean in months                                | 27.8                |
| Preop comorbidities, N (%)                    |                     |
| HTN                                           | 33 (69)             |
| DM                                            | 10 (21)             |
| Cardiac                                       | 13 (27)             |
| Solitary kidney, N (%)                        | 2 (4)               |
| Median tumor size in cm (range)               | 3.2 (0.6-7)         |
| Tumor histology, N (%)                        |                     |
| Clear cell                                    | 27 (56)             |
| Papillary                                     | 17 (35)             |
| Angiomyolipoma                                | 2 (4)               |
| Oncocytoma                                    | 1 (2)               |
| Hemangiopericytoma                            | 1 (2)               |
| Non-cancer renal histopathologies, N (%)      |                     |
| Nephrosclerosis                               | 29 (60)             |
| Arteriosclerosis                              | 5 (10)              |
| Chronic interstitial inflammation             | 2 (4)               |
| Diabetic nephropathy                          | 1 (2)               |
| Tumor side, N (%)                             |                     |
| Left                                          | 25 (52)             |
| Right                                         | 23 (48)             |
| Surgical approach, N (%)                      |                     |
| Open                                          | 20 (42)             |
| Laparoscopic                                  | 28 (58)             |
| Median ischemia time in min (range)           |                     |
| Cold n=3                                       | 31.5 (28-36)        |
| Warm open n=14                                | 21.1 (19-23)        |
| Warm lap n=26                                 | 28.8 (15-58)        |
| No data                                       | 2 lap; 3 open       |
| Median Fuhrman grade (range)                  | 2 (1-4)             |
| AJCC pathologic tumor stage 23, N (%)         |                     |
| pT1a                                          | 34 (71)             |
| pT1b                                          | 6 (13)              |
| pT2a                                          | 3 (6)               |
| Benign                                        | 5 (10)              |
| Serum creatinine (mmol/l)                     |                     |
| Mean±SD Pre-op                               | 91.3±27.0 \(^b\)    |
| Mean±SD Post-op                              | 93.2±31.2 \(^b\)    |
| Mean number BP measurements (IQR)             |                     |
| Preop                                         | 6.1 (3-9)           |
| Postop                                        | 4.7 (2-6)           |

Values are presented as number (%) or median (range).

HTN, hypertension; DM, diabetes mellitus; lap, laparoscopic; AJCC, American Joint Committee on Cancer; SD, standard deviation; BP, blood pressure; IQR, interquartile range.

\(^a\): Comparison of open and lap warm ischemia time, p=0.037. \(^b\): AJCC Cancer Staging Manual, 7th ed., Reference \[23\]. \(^c\): Comparison of preoperative to postoperative creatinine, p=0.43.

DISCUSSION

This is the first series to determine the effects of PN on preoperative versus postoperative BP. With the use of BP measurements routinely performed by family physicians, we retrospectively compared preoperative and postoperative BPs in 48 patients with a follow-up of 2 years. In the total cohort, there was no significant change in mean SBP or DBP within 1 year after surgery. Beyond 1 year after surgery, a minor improvement in DBP (1.6 mmHg) occurred with no change in SBP. The improvement in DBP was probably not clinically significant. Therefore, BP in the short-term and long-term appears to be preserved after PN, although the possibility remains for an increase or decrease in BP in a cohort with a longer follow-up or more patients recruited. These findings reject the hypotheses suggesting that the technique of PN can induce a postoperative hypertensive response as a consequence of renin-angiotensin activation.

An alternative explanation is that renal masses themselves could cause compressive effects on surrounding renal parenchyma or generate paraneoplastic syndromes that result in hypertension. A recent study from Montenegro showed an improvement in hypertension in 24 patients undergoing radical nephrectomy for renal cell carcinoma [21]. The average preoperative BP in that study was particularly high (161/99 mmHg) compared with our study (132/78 mmHg), and no details on tumor size or methods of recording BP were provided. Given that all patients in the Montenegro study underwent a radical nephrectomy, it is likely that the patient population in that study had much larger tumors than did our cohort, which could have a stronger negative influence on BP through paraneoplastic or compressive effects on the renal parenchyma. A major strength of our study is that preoperative BP data were generated before the patients were diagnosed with a renal cancer to reduce any anxiety or stress-related impact on BP, which was not likely the case in the study from Montenegro.

Several transplant nephrectomy studies are contra-
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TABLE 2. Paired comparison of blood pressure measurements from before and different time ranges after surgery

| BP measurement | Pre-op | Post-op follow-up | Post-op follow-up | Post-op follow-up |
|----------------|--------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
|                | < 1 yr | p-value vs. pre-op | > 1 yr | p-value vs. pre-op |
| Systolic in mmHg: |        |                   |       |                   |
| Mean (SD)      | 132.4 (11.69) | 132.3 (12.19) | 131.2 (11.23) |         |
| Median (IQR)   | 132.1 (123.7-140.2) | 130.8 (123.0-139.3) | 0.59 | 131.0 (123.3-136.5) | 0.34 |
| Diastolic in mmHg: |        |                   |       |                   |
| Mean (SD)      | 78.0 (5.58) | 77.0 (6.16) | 76.4 (6.45) |         |
| Median (IQR)   | 77.5 (74.5-81.5) | 76.9 (73.8-80.0) | 0.30 | 77.0 (71.2-80.3) | 0.01 |

SD, standard deviation; IQR, interquartile range.

FIG. 1. Mean number of medications taken per patient before surgery compared with at 1 year after surgery and beyond 1 year at the last follow-up (p > 0.37).

SELECTING PATIENTS

selecting patients who are closely followed with BP measurements by family physicians. These patients may have tighter BP control with medications, which could lead to a false-negative effect on BP. We addressed this concern by tabulating the number of BP medications the patients were taking before and after surgery. There were no significant differences in the number of BP medications taken before and after surgery. We were only able to reliably track ACEI and ARB medication dosage changes and found no significant dosage changes, which suggests a low likelihood of significant dosage changes to other antihypertensives. Therefore, medication adjustments had a low chance of affecting our results. Unfortunately, owing to the retrospective nature of our study, we were unable to account for changes in medications other than antihypertensives that could also affect blood pressure.

Another limitation in our study was the lack of a control comparison group such as patients who underwent radical nephrectomy. However, because we compared patients in a pairwise fashion (preoperative to postoperative) and demonstrated no effect on BP, a control group would not have changed our conclusion with respect to our original hypothesis. In addition, the majority of patients who undergo PN in our institution have masses < 4 cm, such that a radical nephrectomy cohort would not be an equivalent control group because these patients typically have much larger renal masses with more potential to impact BP.

Another limitation of our study was the lack of control BP measurements with respect to setting, time of day, and technique. However, by using a paired design such that the same family physician performed the measurement before and after surgery, we tried to minimize inter-observer variability.

CONCLUSIONS

This study, although exploratory, provides the first evidence that PN for small renal masses in a contemporary cohort is not likely a risk factor for worse BP outcome compared with before surgery. The lack of BP deterioration is particularly important in view of the recent evidence identifying hypertension as an independent risk factor for renal impairment after partial or radical nephrectomy [7].
Overall, these results should be generalizable with respect to the effect of PN on BP in the cohort of patients with renal masses less than 4 cm. A larger follow-up study is required to confirm these results.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST
The authors have nothing to disclose.

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Title:
Effects of partial nephrectomy on postoperative blood pressure.

Date:
2012-03

Citation:
Lawrentschuk, N., Trottier, G., Mayo, K. & Rendon, R. A. (2012). Effects of partial nephrectomy on postoperative blood pressure.. Korean J Urol, 53 (3), pp.154-158. https://doi.org/10.4111/kju.2012.53.3.154.

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