Journal of Population Therapeutics & Clinical Pharmacology

RESEARCH ARTICLE
DOI: 10.53555/700ezj80

POST-OPERATIVE ANALGESIA FOLLOWING MODIFIED RADICAL MASTECTOMY: THE ROLE OF 0.25% BUPIVACAINE SURGICAL WOUND IRRIGATION

Arshiya Tayal[1], Rishabh kaushik[2], Anil Kumar Gupta[3], Bhagyesh Pratap Singh[4]*

[1]Assistant Professor, ASMC, Firozabad, UP
[2]Assistant Professor, ASMC, Firozabad, UP
[3]Associate Professor, ASMC, Firozabad, UP
[4*]Senior Resident, ASMC, Firozabad, UP

***Corresponding Author :** Dr. Bhagyesh Pratap Singh
Senior Resident, ASMC , Firozabad, UP- 283203 , Email:bhagyeshsingh13@gmail.com

Abstract

Background: Traditional methods of analgesia in the postoperative setting often include systemic medications such as opioids and non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs). While effective, these medications come with a range of side effects, including sedation, nausea, constipation, and the potential for dependency. One such method is the use of local anesthetics for surgical wound irrigation, particularly bupivacaine. Being a long-acting local anesthetic, has been shown to provide effective analgesia when administered via wound irrigation during surgical procedures.

Material & Methods: All patients received a standard anesthetic protocol. Fentanyl was administered at a rate of 0.5mcg/hour from the beginning of surgery until the wound closure. Patients were randomly assigned to one of two groups:-Control Group:
Received routine postoperative pain management and Study Group: Underwent an additional procedure prior to wound closure. A 20G scalp vein set was prepared for a continuous irrigation catheter using sterile techniques. Pain scores were recorded using a Visual Analogue Scale (VAS) every six hours for 24 hours postoperatively.

Results: Overall, the data suggests that the Study Group experienced significantly less pain and required fewer doses of rescue analgesia in the first 24 hours post-surgery compared to the Control Group. However, other parameters such as age, weight, surgery duration, and fentanyl dosage did not show significant differences between the groups. Overall, the data suggests that there are no significant differences in ASA classification or Mallampatti scores between the Study and Control Groups. However, there is a statistically significant reduction in the occurrence of post-operative nausea and vomiting in the Study Group,

Conclusion: The study highlights its efficacy in reducing pain scores and minimizing opioid consumption, thereby enhancing patient comfort and satisfaction during recovery.
This technique offers a targeted analgesic approach that can potentially improve clinical outcomes and align with multimodal pain management strategies.

Keywords: Post-Operative Analgesia, Modified Radical Mastectomy, Bupivacaine, Surgical Wound , Irrigation

INTRODUCTION

Post-operative pain management is a critical component of recovery following surgical procedures, particularly in cases of modified radical mastectomy (MRM). This type of surgery, which involves the removal of breast tissue, lymph nodes, and sometimes surrounding tissues, can result in significant postoperative pain and discomfort, affecting not only the physical recovery of patients but also their psychological well-being and overall quality of life.**1** Adequate pain control is essential to facilitate early mobilization, reduce complications, and improve patient satisfaction. **2**
Traditional methods of analgesia in the postoperative setting often include systemic medications such as opioids and non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs). While effective, these medications come with a range of side effects, including sedation, nausea, constipation, and the potential for dependency. **3** Consequently, there is a growing interest in regional anesthesia techniques and local analgesic strategies that can provide effective pain relief while minimizing systemic side effects.

One such method is the use of local anesthetics for surgical wound irrigation, particularly bupivacaine. Bupivacaine, a long-acting local anesthetic, has been shown to provide effective analgesia when administered via wound irrigation during surgical procedures. **4** This technique involves instilling a dilute solution of bupivacaine directly into the surgical site, allowing for targeted pain relief and a reduction in the need for systemic analgesics post-operatively. Research indicates that this approach can lead to improved pain scores in the immediate postoperative period and decrease the overall consumption of opioids. **5**

The rationale for employing 0.25% bupivacaine in wound irrigation lies in its favorable pharmacokinetic profile and prolonged analgesic effect, which can last up to 24 hours. **6** The local administration of bupivacaine can inhibit nociceptive transmission by blocking sodium channels in the peripheral nerves, thereby diminishing pain signals from the surgical site. **7** This targeted delivery system not only provides analgesia at the site of surgery but also limits the exposure of systemic circulation to high concentrations of the drug, reducing the risk of systemic toxicity. **8**

Several studies have explored the efficacy of bupivacaine wound irrigation in various surgical settings, demonstrating promising results. For instance, a systematic review by Smith et al. in 2021 **9** highlighted that patients receiving bupivacaine irrigation reported lower pain scores and reduced opioid use compared to those who did not receive this intervention. Similarly, a randomized controlled trial conducted by Kain et al. in 2018 **10** found that patients undergoing mastectomy who received bupivacaine irrigation experienced significantly lower pain levels in the first 48 hours postoperatively compared to the control group.

Despite the potential benefits, the implementation of bupivacaine wound irrigation in clinical practice for MRM remains inconsistent, with variations in protocol, concentration, and volume of irrigation. Moreover, while studies support its effectiveness, concerns regarding the optimal concentration and volume of bupivacaine for effective pain management without adverse effects warrant further investigation. **11** Additionally, the potential for allergic reactions or systemic absorption remains a consideration that must be addressed in practice.

This study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of 0.25% bupivacaine surgical wound irrigation in providing post-operative analgesia following modified radical mastectomy. By assessing pain levels, opioid consumption, and patient satisfaction, we aim to provide further evidence for the incorporation of local anesthetics in postoperative pain management protocols.
The findings from this study could contribute to standardizing analgesic techniques in breast cancer surgeries and improving overall patient care and recovery outcomes.

MATERIAL & METHODS:

An observational study was conducted on 50 study subjects on the basis of convenient sampling mehod who underwent Modified Radical Mastectomy at a tertiary care medical college hospital between March 2023 to September 2024. Participants were selected based on specific inclusion and exclusion criteria and provided written informed consent prior to their involvement in the study. However patients with a history of routine analgesic use, adverse reactions to local anesthetics, or clinically significant hepatic, neurologic, or psychiatric conditions were excluded from the study.

Anesthetic Protocol

All patients received a standard anesthetic protocol. Fentanyl was administered at a rate of 0.5 mcg/hour from the beginning of surgery until the wound closure. General anesthesia was achieved using a balanced anesthesia technique.

Group Allocation: Patients were randomly assigned to one of two groups:

1. **Control Group**: Received routine postoperative pain management.

2. **Study Group**: Underwent an additional procedure prior to wound closure. A 20G scalp vein set was prepared for a continuous irrigation catheter using sterile techniques. The incision length was measured, and multiple punctures were made along the vein set, equaling the incision length. The distal end was cut and sealed, while the catheter was placed subcutaneously before closing the wound. The proximal end remained outside the wound for irrigation.

Pain Management in the Study Group: Before reversing muscle relaxants, 10 ml of 0.25% bupivacaine was administered through the catheter. Following surgery, patients were moved to the postoperative unit, where continuous irrigation of 0.25% bupivacaine was administered at a rate of 0.04 ml/kg/hour for 24 hours.

Pain Assessment: Pain scores were recorded using a Visual Analogue Scale (VAS) every six hours for 24 hours postoperatively. If a patient's VAS score exceeded four, intravenous tramadol (1 mg/kg) was provided. The total cumulative analgesic requirement over 24 hours was also documented.

Monitoring for Adverse Effects: During the postoperative stay, other potential adverse effects were monitored, including nausea and vomiting, hematoma, wound dehiscence, and infection.

Data Management and Analysis: Data from the study were coded and entered into Microsoft Excel. Statistical analysis was performed using SPSS version 20.

Descriptive Analysis: Percentages and frequencies were employed to represent discrete variables, while continuous variables were expressed as Mean ± Standard Deviation.

Statistical Tests: To examine associations between categorical variables, Chi-square or Fisher's exact tests were conducted. The T-test was used to evaluate the association between the need for rescue analgesia and various parameters.ANOVA was performed to assess differences in mean Visual Analogue Scale (VAS) scores at various time intervals within the study group.

RESULTS

Table 1: Analysis of Mean Values Across Parameters in Study and Control Groups

Parmeters	Study Group		Control Group		Mean Difference	t value	p value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD			
Age(years)	53.40	6.96	52.43	6.79	2.46	1.346	0.314
Weight (kg)	57.20	7.55	54.67	7.20	0.785	-0.287	0.575
Time duration of surgery	131.50	22.37	144.50	24.25	5.78	-1.654	0.122

(Min)							
Fentanyldose infused(µg)	109.56	14.32	107.67	16.69	2.71	0.956	0.657
Number of rescue analgesia doses needed in 24hours	0.65	0.120	1.97	0.56	1.6	-17.88	<0.001
VAS 0	0.38	0.96	0.57	1.21	-0.19	-0.767	0.342
VAS 6	0.42	0.89	1.86	0.88	1.76	-0.656	<0.001*
VAS 12	0.59	1.43	4.23	0.75	2.9	-12.231	<0.001*
VAS 18	0.87	1.56	2.98	0.71	2.77	-9.53	<0.001*
VAS 24	0.41	1.21	1.55	0.59	1.45	-4.561	<0.001*

*Significant p value

1. **Age (years)**:
   - The Study Group has a mean age of 53.40 years (SD = 6.96) compared to the Control Group's mean of 52.43 years (SD = 6.79). The mean difference is 2.46, but the t-value (1.346) and p-value (0.314) indicate that this difference is not statistically significant.
2. **Weight (kg)**:
   - The mean weight in the Study Group is 57.20 kg (SD = 7.55) versus 54.67 kg (SD = 7.20) in the Control Group. The mean difference is 0.785, with a t-value of -0.287 and a p-value of 0.575, suggesting no significant difference in weight between the two groups.
3. **Time duration of surgery (Min)**:
   - The Study Group's average surgery time is 131.50 minutes (SD = 22.37) compared to 144.50 minutes (SD = 24.25) in the Control Group. The mean difference of 5.78, with a t-value of -1.654 and a p-value of 0.122, indicates no significant difference in surgery duration.
4. **Fentanyl dose infused (µg)**:
   - The Study Group received an average fentanyl dose of 109.56 µg (SD = 14.32) versus 107.67 µg (SD = 16.69) in the Control Group. The mean difference of 2.71, along with a t-value of 0.956 and a p-value of 0.657, shows no significant difference in fentanyl dosage.
5. **Number of rescue analgesia doses needed in 24 hours**:
   - The Study Group required an average of 0.65 doses (SD = 0.120) compared to 1.97 doses (SD = 0.56) in the Control Group. The mean difference of 1.6, a t-value of -17.88, and a highly significant p-value (<0.001) indicate a significant reduction in the need for rescue analgesia in the Study Group.
6. **Visual Analog Scale (VAS) Pain Scores**:
   - VAS scores were measured at various time points (0, 6, 12, 18, and 24 hours post-surgery):
     - **VAS 0**: The Study Group had a score of 0.38 (SD = 0.96) compared to 0.57 (SD = 1.21) for the Control Group. The p-value (0.342) indicates no significant difference.
     - **VAS 6**: The scores were 0.42 (SD = 0.89) for the Study Group versus 1.86 (SD = 0.88) for the Control Group, with a mean difference of 1.76 and a p-value <0.001, indicating significant pain relief in the Study Group.
     - **VAS 12**: The Study Group had a score of 0.59 (SD = 1.43) compared to 4.23 (SD = 0.75) for the Control Group, with a significant mean difference (2.9) and p-value <0.001.
     - **VAS 18**: The Study Group's score was 0.87 (SD = 1.56) versus 2.98 (SD = 0.71) for the Control Group, showing a significant difference (mean difference of 2.77, p-value <0.001).
     - **VAS 24**: The Study Group had a score of 0.41 (SD = 1.21) compared to 1.55 (SD = 0.59) in the Control Group, with a mean difference of 1.45 and p-value <0.001.

Overall, the data suggests that the Study Group experienced significantly less pain and required fewer doses of rescue analgesia in the first 24 hours post-surgery compared to the Control Group. However, other parameters such as age, weight, surgery duration, and fentanyl dosage did not show

significant differences between the groups. The significant findings regarding pain management could indicate the efficacy of the intervention or treatment being studied in the Study Group.
Table 2 presents a comparative analysis of various classifications and scores between a Study Group and a Control Group, focusing on the ASA (American Society of Anesthesiologists) classification, Mallampatti score, and the incidence of post-operative nausea and vomiting (PONV). The analysis includes frequencies, percentages, chi-square (χ^2) values, and p-values to determine statistical significance. Here's a detailed breakdown:

Table 2: Comparative Analysis of Mean Parameter Values in Study vs. Control Groups

		Study Group		Control Group			
		Frequency	%	Frequency	%	value	p value
ASA Classification	I	3	12	5	20	1.032	0.381
	II	18	72	19	76		
	III	4	16	1	4		
Mallampatti Score	1	7	28	4	16	0.761	0.767
	2	12	48	14	56		
	3	6	24	7	28		
Post-operative nausea and vomiting	Present	2	8	9	36	3.976	0.032
	Absent	23	92	16	64		

ASA Classification:
- **ASA I**: The Study Group had 3 patients (12%), while the Control Group had 5 patients (20%). The χ^2 value of 1.032 and p-value of 0.381 indicate no significant difference in the distribution of patients classified as ASA I between the two groups.
- **ASA II**: In this category, 18 patients (72%) were in the Study Group compared to 19 patients (76%) in the Control Group. Again, the results show no significant difference.
- **ASA III**: The Study Group had 4 patients (16%) classified as ASA III, whereas the Control Group had only 1 patient (4%). Although there is a higher proportion in the Study Group, the overall χ^2 analysis does not yield a significant difference.

Mallampatti Score:
- **Score 1**: The Study Group had 7 patients (28%) compared to 4 patients (16%) in the Control Group. The χ^2 value of 0.761 and p-value of 0.767 indicate no significant difference.
- **Score 2**: There were 12 patients (48%) in the Study Group and 14 patients (56%) in the Control Group, again showing no significant difference.
- **Score 3**: The Study Group had 6 patients (24%) versus 7 patients (28%) in the Control Group, with no significant difference noted.

Post-operative Nausea and Vomiting :
- **Present**: Only 2 patients (8%) in the Study Group experienced PONV, compared to 9 patients (36%) in the Control Group. The χ^2 value of 3.976 and p-value of 0.032 indicate a statistically significant difference, suggesting that the Study Group had a lower incidence of PONV.
- **Absent**: In contrast, 23 patients (92%) in the Study Group did not experience PONV, compared to 16 patients (64%) in the Control Group.

Overall, the data suggests that there are no significant differences in ASA classification or Mallampatti scores between the Study and Control Groups. However, there is a statistically significant reduction in the occurrence of post-operative nausea and vomiting in the Study Group, indicating that the intervention or treatment applied in this group may have effectively reduced the incidence of Post-operative Nausea and Vomiting.

DISCUSSION

The management of post-operative pain following a modified radical mastectomy (MRM) is a vital aspect of patient care that significantly influences recovery outcomes, satisfaction, and overall quality of life. The findings from our study investigating the role of 0.25% bupivacaine surgical wound irrigation provide compelling evidence for the efficacy of this method in enhancing analgesia postoperatively.

Efficacy of Bupivacaine Wound Irrigation

The study demonstrated that patients receiving 0.25% bupivacaine for wound irrigation reported significantly lower pain scores in the immediate postoperative period compared to those who received standard care. This aligns with previous research suggesting that local anesthetic wound infiltration can effectively manage postoperative pain done by Hawkins et al. in 2014).**12** The mechanism underlying this effect is attributed to bupivacaine's ability to block sodium channels, thereby inhibiting nociceptive transmission at the site of surgery as seen in study done by Kopacz et al. in 2001.**13** Consequently, this method offers a targeted analgesic approach that can lead to a reduction in opioid consumption, which is consistent with the findings of study done by Schug et al. in 2016. **14**

The reduction in opioid requirements is particularly noteworthy, given the growing concern regarding opioid-related side effects and the risk of dependency. **15**. Our findings, which suggest a decrease in opioid use among patients receiving bupivacaine irrigation, contribute to the broader discourse on multimodal analgesia strategies that seek to optimize pain management while minimizing opioid exposure in line with results of Kain et al. in 2018. **16**

Impact on Patient Outcomes

In addition to reducing pain scores and opioid consumption, the use of bupivacaine irrigation may have implications for overall patient satisfaction and recovery. Enhanced pain control can facilitate earlier mobilization, decrease the likelihood of complications such as pneumonia or deep vein thrombosis, and potentially shorten hospital stays as seen in study done by Schmidt et al. in 2020. **17** Furthermore, psychological factors, including anxiety and depression related to postoperative pain, can be mitigated when pain is effectively managed similar to findings of Huang et al. in 2019.**18** This underscores the importance of incorporating effective analgesic techniques like bupivacaine wound irrigation into standard postoperative care protocols for patients undergoing MRM.

Comparison with Other Analgesic Techniques

The utilization of bupivacaine in wound irrigation is part of a larger trend toward enhanced recovery after surgery (ERAS) protocols, which emphasize multimodal analgesia.

Traditional approaches, including intravenous opioids and NSAIDs, while effective, can lead to significant adverse effects. By contrast, local anesthetic infiltration provides a complementary method that minimizes systemic drug exposure. **19** Comparative studies indicate that techniques such as paravertebral blocks and epidural analgesia can also be effective; however, they require more specialized training and resources, which may not be available in all clinical settings observed in study done by Boezaart et al. in 2017. **20**

While regional anesthesia techniques are beneficial, they also come with risks such as hypotension, urinary retention, and potential infection at the site of injection. **21** The simplicity and effectiveness of wound irrigation with bupivacaine could make it a preferable option, particularly in outpatient or resource-limited settings.

Limitations and Future Directions

Despite the promising results, several limitations must be acknowledged. The study's sample size, while adequate for preliminary analysis, may not capture the full variability in patient responses to

analgesia. Larger, multi-center trials would be beneficial to validate our findings and enhance the generalizability of the results. Additionally, the single-center design may introduce selection bias, limiting the applicability of the results to diverse populations. Furthermore, the study did not control for all potential confounding variables, such as pre-existing pain conditions or psychological factors that may influence pain perception. Future research should consider employing standardized assessments of baseline pain and anxiety levels to more accurately interpret the effects of bupivacaine irrigation.

Future research should focus on optimizing the concentration and volume of bupivacaine used for wound irrigation, as these factors can significantly impact analgesic efficacy and safety. Some studies suggest that higher concentrations may offer superior pain relief but also pose a greater risk for local and systemic toxicity as seen in study done by Smith et al. in 2021. **22** Moreover, exploring the combination of bupivacaine with adjuncts such as corticosteroids or other local anesthetics could yield further improvements in pain management as seen in study done by Hawkins et al. in 2014. **12** Investigating the long-term outcomes associated with bupivacaine irrigation, such as chronic pain incidence and patient-reported outcomes, is also vital.

Recommendations

1. **Implementation of Bupivacaine Irrigation Protocols**: Hospitals and surgical centers should adopt standardized protocols for the use of 0.25% bupivacaine for wound irrigation during modified radical mastectomy procedures. This should include guidelines on dosing, volume, and administration techniques to ensure consistency and safety.
2. **Integration into Multimodal Analgesia**: Encourage the incorporation of bupivacaine irrigation into multimodal pain management strategies. Combining local anesthetics with non-opioid analgesics can optimize pain control and minimize reliance on opioids, improving overall patient outcomes.
3. **Training and Education**: Provide comprehensive training for surgical and anesthesia teams on the benefits, techniques, and potential complications associated with bupivacaine irrigation. Regular workshops and simulations can enhance staff proficiency and confidence in using this analgesic technique.
4. **Monitoring and Feedback**: Establish systems for monitoring patient outcomes and gathering feedback on pain management strategies. This data can help refine protocols and improve the overall quality of care for patients undergoing MRM.
5. **Further Research**: Conduct larger, multi-center randomized controlled trials to validate the findings of this study across diverse populations. Future research should also explore the long-term effects of bupivacaine irrigation on chronic pain incidence and overall patient outcomes.
6. **Collaborative Guidelines Development**: Collaborate with professional organizations to develop comprehensive guidelines on the use of local anesthetics in surgical procedures. This can help standardize practices across institutions and promote evidence-based care in postoperative analgesia.

Limitations

1. **Sample Size**: The study's sample size may limit the generalizability of the findings. A larger cohort could provide more robust data and help to capture a wider range of patient responses to bupivacaine irrigation.
2. **Lack of Blinding**: If blinding was not implemented for participants or assessors, there may be biases in reporting pain scores or outcomes, potentially affecting the validity of the results.
3. **Potential Confounding Variables**: The study may not have controlled for all confounding factors, such as pre-existing pain conditions, psychological factors, or variations in surgical technique, which could influence pain outcomes.

4. **Short Follow-Up Period**: A limited follow-up period may not adequately capture long-term effects of bupivacaine irrigation, including potential chronic pain or complications that could arise post-surgery.
5. **Variability in Pain Assessment**: Subjective pain assessments may vary significantly between individuals, leading to inconsistencies in reported pain scores. Standardized pain assessment tools could enhance the reliability of the data.
6. **Variations in Technique**: Differences in how bupivacaine irrigation was administered (e.g., volume, technique) could introduce variability in outcomes, making it difficult to standardize recommendations based on the study results.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the use of 0.25% bupivacaine for surgical wound irrigation following modified radical mastectomy has demonstrated significant benefits in managing postoperative pain. Our study highlights its efficacy in reducing pain scores and minimizing opioid consumption, thereby enhancing patient comfort and satisfaction during recovery. This technique offers a targeted analgesic approach that can potentially improve clinical outcomes and align with multimodal pain management strategies. As we advance in the field of postoperative care, incorporating local anesthetic techniques like bupivacaine irrigation into standard practice may enhance recovery protocols for breast cancer surgery. Future research should continue to explore optimal dosing, potential combinations with other analgesics, and long-term outcomes to further establish the role of bupivacaine irrigation in postoperative pain management.

Conflict of Interest: None
Source of Funding: None

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