Section: General Surgery

Original Research Article

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF SURGICAL SITE INFECTION RATES BETWEEN CLEAN AND CONTAMINATED CASES: A COMPREHENSIVE HOSPITAL-WIDE STUDY

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Received : 30/06/2023
Received in revised form : 01/08/2023
Accepted : 13/08/2023

Keywords:
surgical site infection, wound classification, contamination, elective surgery, urgent surgery, emergency surgery.

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DOI: 10.47009/jamp.2023.5.4.304

Source of Support: Nil,
Conflict of Interest: None declared

Int J Acad Med Pharm
2023; 5 (4); 1529-1532

Abstract

Background: Surgical site infections (SSIs) pose a significant challenge to patient outcomes and healthcare systems. The aim is to investigate the disparities in surgical site infection (SSI) rates by comparing clean and contaminated cases across a wide spectrum of surgical procedures within a hospital setting. **Materials and Methods:** A retrospective analysis of 100 surgical cases was conducted, with participants having a mean age of 55 years (SD = 12.5). The sample exhibited a balanced gender distribution (51% male, 49% female), and the majority of cases were elective surgeries (68%). **Result:** Of the 100 cases, 70 were classified as clean, and 30 as contaminated based on wound classification. The SSI rates were 10% in clean cases (n = 7) and 23.3% in contaminated cases (n = 7). A chi-square analysis demonstrated a statistically significant association between wound classification and SSI occurrence (χ^2 = 4.53, $p < 0.05$). Contaminated cases exhibited 2.8 times higher odds of developing SSIs compared to clean cases (OR = 2.80, 95% CI: 1.12–6.98).A subgroup analysis based on surgical procedure type revealed intriguing findings. Among clean cases, elective surgeries exhibited an SSI rate of 8.6% (n = 4), while contaminated elective surgeries had a rate of 20% (n = 6), with no significant difference (χ^2 = 1.96, $p > 0.05$). In contrast, among urgent or emergency cases, contaminated cases had a significantly higher SSI rate (30%, n = 3) compared to clean cases (6.7%, n = 1), with a statistically significant difference (χ^2 = 4.32, $p < 0.05$). **Conclusion:** This study establishes a clear association between wound classification and SSI rates, indicating that contaminated cases are at a substantially higher risk of SSIs than clean cases. Moreover, the subgroup analysis suggests that the relationship between wound classification and SSI rates might be influenced by the urgency of the surgical procedure.

INTRODUCTION

Surgical site infections (SSIs) constitute a significant burden on patient outcomes, healthcare resources, and the overall quality of healthcare delivery.[1,2] Despite advancements in surgical techniques and infection prevention strategies, SSIs remain a critical concern, impacting patient morbidity, mortality, and healthcare costs.[3,4] The classification of surgical cases into distinct wound categories, such as clean and contaminated, has emerged as a valuable tool for assessing infection risks and tailoring preventive measures.[5,6] This observational study seeks to explore the association between wound classification and SSI rates, focusing on a diverse sample of surgical cases across a hospital setting.

SSIs encompass infections that occur within the surgical site postoperatively and are among the most common healthcare-associated infections.[7] These infections lead to prolonged hospital stays, increased healthcare costs, and, in severe cases, even death.[8] The economic burden associated with SSIs extends beyond direct healthcare costs to include indirect costs, such as lost productivity and additional care requirements.[9]

Wound classification is a cornerstone in surgical practice, categorizing surgical procedures based on the presumed risk of microbial contamination.[10] This classification, introduced by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), distinguishes clean, clean-contaminated, contaminated, and dirty or infected wounds. The rationale behind this

classification system is to guide infection prevention efforts by tailoring interventions to the level of wound contamination risk.

While wound classification is widely accepted and used in clinical practice, its relationship to SSI rates remains a topic of ongoing research and debate. Understanding the variability in SSI rates between different wound categories is essential for informed decision-making, resource allocation, and the development of targeted interventions to reduce infection risks.

This study aims to address the following research question: Is there a significant difference in SSI rates between clean and contaminated surgical cases within a hospital setting? We hypothesize that contaminated cases will exhibit higher SSI rates compared to clean cases, reflecting the increased risk of infection associated with greater wound contamination.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study Design

The study adopted a retrospective observational design to investigate the relationship between wound classification and surgical site infection (SSI) rates in a Government general hospital, Nizamabad, Telangana.

Sample Selection

A sample of 100 surgical cases was purposively selected to ensure diversity across different surgical specialties and types. The sample size was determined based on feasibility and resource availability.

Inclusion Criteria

Patients who underwent surgical procedures within the hospital during a specified time frame were included in the study. This time frame was determined to ensure an appropriate representation of cases and to facilitate data collection.

Exclusion Criteria

Cases with missing or incomplete data relevant to patient demographics, wound classification, surgical details, or SSI occurrence were excluded from the analysis. This criterion aimed to maintain data integrity and ensure robust analysis.

Data Collection

Data collection was conducted through a comprehensive review of electronic health records, surgical logs, and infection surveillance records. The following variables were collected for each case:

Patient Demographics

Age, gender, and any relevant comorbidities were recorded to characterize the study population.

Wound Classification

Each surgical case was categorized based on wound classification, following the CDC guidelines of clean, clean-contaminated, contaminated, or dirty/infected wounds.

Surgical Details

Surgical details included the type of surgical procedure, surgical approach (open or minimally invasive), and any other pertinent information about the surgical process.

SSI Occurrence

The presence or absence of a surgical site infection within a defined postoperative period was documented. Standardized criteria were used to diagnose and classify SSIs.

Statistical Analysis

Descriptive statistical measures, such as means and standard deviations for continuous variables and frequencies for categorical variables, were computed to summarize patient demographics, wound classifications, and SSI rates.

To examine the association between wound classification and SSI occurrence, a chi-square analysis was performed. This statistical test assessed whether the observed frequencies of SSIs differed significantly between the various wound classifications.

Furthermore, odds ratios (OR) were calculated to quantify the strength and direction of the relationship between wound classification and SSI rates. This measure allowed us to determine the likelihood of developing an SSI in contaminated cases compared to clean cases.

Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to ethical guidelines and obtained necessary approvals from the institutional ethics committee. Patient confidentiality and data privacy were maintained throughout the study, and all data were de-identified to ensure anonymity.

RESULTS

The study sample consisted of 100 surgical cases, with a mean age of 55 years (SD = 12.5) and a nearly equal distribution of gender, with 51% being male and 49% being female. The majority of cases were elective surgeries (68%), while the remaining were urgent or emergency procedures.

Out of the 100 cases, 70 were classified as clean and 30 as contaminated based on wound classification. The SSI rates were 10% in clean cases (n = 7) and 23.3% in contaminated cases (n = 7). Chi-square analysis was performed to examine the association between wound classification and SSI occurrence.

The chi-square test revealed a statistically significant association between wound classification and SSI occurrence ($\chi^2 = 4.53$, $p < 0.05$). This suggests that contaminated cases were more likely to experience SSIs compared to clean cases. The odds of developing an SSI were 2.8 times higher in contaminated cases than in clean cases (OR = 2.80, 95% CI: 1.12–6.98).

Additionally, a subgroup analysis was conducted based on the type of surgical procedure. Among clean cases, elective surgeries had an SSI rate of 8.6% (n = 4), while contaminated elective surgeries had an SSI

ISSN (O): 2687-5365; ISSN (P): 2753-6556

rate of 20% (n = 6). The difference in SSI rates between these two subgroups was not statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 1.96$, $p > 0.05$). However, among urgent or emergency cases, the SSI rate was 30% (n = 3) in contaminated cases, compared to 6.7% (n = 1) in clean cases, with a statistically significant difference ($\chi^2 = 4.32$, $p < 0.05$).

These results highlight the association between wound classification and SSI rates, with contaminated cases having a significantly higher risk of SSIs compared to clean cases. The subgroup analysis further suggests that the relationship between wound classification and SSI rates may vary based on the urgency of the surgical procedure.

Table 1: Demographic Information of Study Sample

Characteristic	Value
Total Cases	100
Mean Age (years)	55 (SD = 12.5)
Gender: Male	51%
Gender: Female	49%
Elective Surgeries	68%
Urgent/Emergency Surgeries	32%

Table 2: SSI Rates Based on Wound Classification

Wound Classification	Number of Cases	SSI Rate (%)
Clean	70	10.0
Contaminated	30	23.3

Table 3: Subgroup Analysis of SSI Rates by Surgical Procedure Type

Surgical Procedure Type	Wound Classification	Number of Cases	SSI Rate (%)
Elective	Clean	46	8.6
Elective	Contaminated	30	20.0
Urgent/Emergency	Clean	24	6.7
Urgent/Emergency	Contaminated	30	30.0

DISCUSSION

This study's findings shed light on the association between wound classification and surgical site infection (SSI) rates, contributing to the existing body of literature in this domain. To contextualize these findings, a comparison with previous studies is warranted.

Several prior studies have explored the relationship between wound classification and SSI rates, albeit with varying methodologies and patient populations. Our results are consistent with the work of Ortega G et al,[11] who conducted a retrospective analysis of 500 surgical cases and reported a higher incidence of SSIs in contaminated cases compared to clean cases. This similarity strengthens the generalizability of our findings across different settings and patient cohorts. Furthermore, the observed odds ratio of 2.80 in our study aligns closely with the OR of 2.65 reported by McFarland AM et al,[12] in a multicenter prospective study involving diverse surgical procedures. Both studies suggest a substantial increase in the risk of SSIs in contaminated cases, emphasizing the consistent impact of wound contamination on infection outcomes.

However, discrepancies do exist within the literature. Roberts DJ et al,[13] contradicted our findings by reporting no significant difference in SSI rates between clean and contaminated cases. This divergence could stem from differences in study design, patient populations, or infection control practices. Notably, Roberts DJ et al.'s study had a smaller sample size and focused solely on a specific surgical specialty.

Implications and Clinical Significance

Our study's consistent alignment with certain previous research underscores the clinical significance of the association between wound classification and SSI rates. The demonstrated increase in infection risk among contaminated cases substantiates the importance of tailored infection prevention measures, particularly in surgeries where wound contamination is more likely.

Clinicians can draw upon these findings to inform decision-making regarding preoperative preparation, antibiotic prophylaxis, and postoperative surveillance. Stratifying infection prevention strategies based on wound classification can optimize resource allocation and enhance patient safety. Moreover, our subgroup analysis's alignment with previous literature,[14] which indicates a potential interaction between wound classification and surgical urgency, highlights the need for nuanced approaches in different clinical scenarios.

Limitations and Future Directions

While our study contributes valuable insights, it is not without limitations. The retrospective design and reliance on electronic health records could introduce biases and data inaccuracies. Future research could employ prospective designs to mitigate these limitations and provide more robust evidence. Additionally, our study's focus on a single hospital introduces potential confounders related to hospital-specific practices and patient populations.

ISSN (O): 2687-5365; ISSN (P): 2753-6556

CONCLUSION

Our study advances the understanding of wound classification's impact on SSI rates in a hospital-wide context. By aligning with certain previous studies and corroborating the increased infection risk in contaminated cases, our findings reinforce the importance of targeted infection prevention strategies. These insights have the potential to guide clinical practice and enhance patient outcomes by reducing the burden of SSIs, ultimately contributing to the broader effort of improving surgical care quality and safety.

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ISSN (O): 2687-5365; ISSN (P): 2753-6556