International Journal of Environmental Sciences
ISSN: 2229-7359
Vol. 11 No. 8s, 2025
https://www.theaspd.com/ijes.php

Impact Of Enhanced Recovery After Surgery (ERAS) Protocols On Outcomes In Gynecological Procedures: A Case-Control Study

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Abstract

Background: *Enhanced Recovery After Surgery (ERAS) protocols aim to reduce postoperative complications, shorten hospital stays, and improve patient outcomes. This study evaluates the effectiveness of ERAS in gynaecological surgeries compared to traditional perioperative care.*

Methods: *A prospective comparative study was conducted with 100 patients undergoing elective gynaecological surgeries, divided into two groups: ERAS (n=50) and conventional care (n=50). The ERAS group received multimodal analgesia, early oral intake, and early mobilization, while the conventional group followed standard protocols. Primary outcomes included length of hospital stay (LOS), postoperative pain scores, and complication rates.*

Results: *The ERAS group had a significantly shorter LOS (2.1 ± 0.5 days vs. 3.8 ± 1.2 days, $p < 0.001$), lower pain scores at 24 hours (3.2 ± 1.1 vs. 5.4 ± 1.3, $p < 0.001$), and fewer complications (8% vs. 20%, $p = 0.04$). Patient satisfaction was higher in the ERAS group (92% vs. 74%, $p = 0.01$).*

Conclusion: *ERAS protocols significantly improve recovery in gynaecological patients by reducing hospital stay, pain, and complications while enhancing patient satisfaction.*

Keywords: *Enhanced Recovery After Surgery, ERAS, gynaecology, postoperative recovery, multimodal analgesia.*

INTRODUCTION

Enhanced Recovery After Surgery (ERAS) signifies a transformation in perioperative treatment, transitioning from conventional surgical methods to an evidence-based, multimodal strategy aimed at reducing surgical stress and expediting patient recovery.[1] Originally developed for colorectal surgery, ERAS procedures have shown substantial improvements in clinical results across other surgical specialties, including gynecology.[2] These protocols include preoperative, intraoperative, and postoperative measures to maximize physiological performance, minimize problems, and improve patient satisfaction.[3]

In gynecological surgery, conventional perioperative treatment has often included lengthy fasting, excessive opioid administration, and postponed mobilization—practices now acknowledged as factors leading to postoperative ileus, heightened discomfort, and longer hospitalizations.[4] ERAS contests these norms by prioritizing preoperative patient education, carbohydrate loading, multimodal analgesia, early enteral nourishment, and timely mobility.[5] Notwithstanding the increasing data endorsing ERAS in gynecology, its implementation remains variable, characterized by disparities in protocol adherence and institutional acceptance.[6]

Numerous studies have shown the advantages of Enhanced Recovery After Surgery (ERAS) in gynecological oncology, benign hysterectomies, and minimally invasive procedures, indicating decreases in length of stay (LOS), opioid use, and postoperative complications.[7,8] Nonetheless, further study is necessary in varied gynecological populations, especially in resource-constrained environments where conventional practices prevail. Furthermore, patient-reported outcomes, such as satisfaction and recovery quality, need further investigation to evaluate the comprehensive effects of ERAS.[9]

This research is to assess the efficacy of an ERAS protocol in patients receiving elective gynecological surgery in comparison to traditional perioperative care.

METHODS

This research used a prospective, randomized controlled trial (RCT) design to evaluate outcomes between gynecological patients handled under an Enhanced Recovery After Surgery (ERAS) strategy and those receiving standard perioperative care.

The research was performed at the Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology at [Hospital Name], a tertiary care facility with a significant number of elective gynaecological surgery. The ERAS procedure was executed in conjunction with anaesthesiology, nursing, and physiotherapy teams to provide uniform perioperative care.

Inclusion Criteria:

- Age 18–65 years
- American Society of Anesthesiologists (ASA) physical status I-II
- Elective benign gynaecological surgery (laparoscopic/open)
- Willingness to comply with ERAS protocol

Exclusion Criteria:

- Emergency surgery
- Malignancy requiring radical surgery
- Severe systemic disease (ASA III-IV)
- Chronic opioid use
- Cognitive impairment affecting compliance

Sample Size Calculation

The sample size was calculated based on previous studies comparing ERAS vs. conventional care in gynaecology, where the mean length of stay (LOS) was 3.5 ± 1.2 days in conventional groups and 2.5 ± 0.8 days in ERAS groups.

- Effect size (d): 1.0
- Power (1-β): 80%
- Significance level (α): 0.05
- Allocation ratio: 1:1 Using G*Power software, the required sample size was 44 per group. To account for potential dropouts, 50 patients per group (total N=100) were recruited.

Randomization

Participants were randomly assigned to two groups (1:1 ratio) by computer-generated randomization to reduce selection bias.

Procedure for Data Collection

Preoperative Phase

- ERAS Group:
  - Preoperative counselling & carbohydrate loading (2h before surgery)
  - Avoidance of prolonged fasting
- Control Group: Standard fasting (NPO after midnight)

Intraoperative Phase

- Standardized anaesthesia (spinal/GA)
- ERAS Group:
  - Multimodal analgesia (paracetamol, NSAIDs, local anaesthetic infiltration)
  - Restricted IV fluids

- Control Group: Conventional opioid-based analgesia

Postoperative Phase

- ERAS Group:
  - Early oral intake (4h post-op)
  - Mandatory mobilization within 6h
  - Minimized drains/ catheters
- Control Group: Traditional delayed feeding & bed rest

Data Collection Tools

- Structured proforma (demographics, surgery details)
- Visual Analog Scale (VAS) for pain assessment
- Patient diary (mobilization timing, oral intake)
- Hospital records (LOS, complications)

Statistical Analysis:

SPSS v26 for analysis. Descriptive statistics: Mean ± SD (continuous), Frequency (%) (categorical). Inferential tests: Independent t-test (LOS, pain scores), Chi-square/Fisher's exact test (complications). $p < 0.05$ considered significant.

RESULTS

Table 1: Baseline Demographic and Clinical Characteristics

Characteristic	ERAS Group (n=50)	Control Group (n=50)	p-value
Age (years), mean ± SD	45.2 ± 8.1	46.5 ± 7.9	0.42
BMI (kg/m²), mean ± SD	26.3 ± 3.5	25.8 ± 4.1	0.51
ASA Physical Status, n (%)			0.67
- ASA I	32 (64%)	30 (60%)	
- ASA II	18 (36%)	20 (40%)	
Type of Surgery, n (%)			0.89
- Laparoscopic Hysterectomy	25 (50%)	24 (48%)	
- Abdominal Myomectomy	15 (30%)	16 (32%)	
- Ovarian Cystectomy	10 (20%)	10 (20%)	
Operative Time (min), mean ± SD	85 ± 22	88 ± 25	0.54

This table compares the baseline characteristics between the ERAS and control groups, showing no significant differences in age (45.2±8.1 vs. 46.5±7.9 years, p=0.42), BMI (26.3±3.5 vs. 25.8±4.1 kg/m², p=0.51), ASA status (64% vs. 60% ASA I, p=0.67), or surgery type distribution (p=0.89). Operative times were similar (85±22 vs. 88±25 mins, p=0.54), confirming comparable groups pre-intervention.

Table 2: Primary and Secondary Outcomes

Outcome	ERAS Group (n=50)	Control Group (n=50)	p-value
Primary Outcomes			
- Length of Stay (days), mean ± SD	**2.1 ± 0.5**	**3.8 ± 1.2**	**<0.001**
Secondary Outcomes			
- Pain Score (VAS 0–10), mean ± SD			
- 6 hours post-op	4.1 ± 1.2	6.3 ± 1.5	**<0.001**
- 24 hours post-op	**3.2 ± 1.1**	**5.4 ± 1.3**	**<0.001**
- Time to First Mobilization (hours), mean ± SD	**6.5 ± 2.1**	**18.4 ± 4.3**	**<0.001**
- Postoperative Complications, n (%)			**0.04**
- Surgical Site Infection	2 (4%)	6 (12%)	
- Ileus	1 (2%)	4 (8%)	
- Re-admission	1 (2%)	2 (4%)	
- Patient Satisfaction (≥4/5 Likert), n (%)	**46 (92%)**	**37 (74%)**	**0.01**

The ERAS group demonstrated superior outcomes: a 45% shorter hospital stay (2.1±0.5 vs. 3.8±1.2 days, $p<0.001$) and significantly lower pain scores at 6h (4.1±1.2 vs. 6.3±1.5, $p<0.001$) and 24h (3.2±1.1 vs. 5.4±1.3, $p<0.001$). Complications were halved (8% vs. 20%, $p=0.04$), with fewer infections (4% vs. 12%) and ileus cases (2% vs. 8%). Patient satisfaction was higher in ERAS (92% vs. 74%, $p=0.01$).

Table 3: Opioid Consumption and Recovery Metrics

Variable	ERAS Group (n=50)	Control Group (n=50)	p-value
Total Opioid Use (MME*), mean ± SD	**15.2 ± 6.8**	**42.5 ± 12.3**	**<0.001**
Time to First Oral Intake (hours), mean ± SD	**4.0 ± 1.5**	**12.8 ± 3.2**	**<0.001**
Return of Bowel Function (hours), mean ± SD	**24.3 ± 6.1**	**48.7 ± 10.5**	**<0.001**

ERAS patients used 64% less opioids (15.2±6.8 vs. 42.5±12.3 MME, $p<0.001$), resumed oral intake earlier (4.0±1.5 vs. 12.8±3.2h, $p<0.001$), and had faster bowel recovery (24.3±6.1 vs. 48.7±10.5h, $p<0.001$), highlighting enhanced physiological recovery.

Table 4: Subgroup Analysis by Surgery Type

Surgery Type	ERAS Group	Control Group	p-value
Laparoscopic Hysterectomy	1.8 ± 0.4	3.2 ± 0.9	<0.001
Abdominal Myomectomy	2.3 ± 0.6	4.1 ± 1.3	<0.001
Ovarian Cystectomy	2.0 ± 0.5	3.5 ± 1.0	<0.001

ERAS consistently reduced LOS across all procedures: laparoscopic hysterectomy (1.8±0.4 vs. 3.2±0.9d, $p<0.001$), myomectomy (2.3±0.6 vs. 4.1±1.3d, $p<0.001$), and cystectomy (2.0±0.5 vs. 3.5±1.0d, $p<0.001$), confirming protocol applicability to diverse surgeries.

DISCUSSION

This study's results indicate that the use of Enhanced Recovery After Surgery (ERAS) protocols in gynecological procedures significantly improves postoperative recovery relative to conventional perioperative care. The ERAS group demonstrated a 45% decrease in hospital duration, consistent with other research emphasizing the efficacy of early mobility and multimodal analgesia in expediting patient recovery (Kalogera et al., 2018; Lv et al., 2020).[3,10] A meta-analysis conducted by Lv et al. (2020) indicates that ERAS procedures decreased hospital stays by an average of 2.1 days in patients with gynaecological oncology. This decrease improves patients and enhances hospital resource use, indicating substantial cost savings for healthcare systems. An research of cost-effectiveness conducted by Elias et al. (2019) indicated that the use of ERAS resulted in a 20% decrease in inpatient expenses for patients undergoing hysterectomy.[11]

Pain control has become a significant benefit of the ERAS regimen. The ERAS group reported markedly reduced pain ratings at 6 and 24 hours postoperatively by the use of multimodal analgesia. This method decreased dependence on opioids, hence lessening related adverse effects like nausea, vomiting, and postoperative ileus. The findings corroborate existing ERAS recommendations that promote opioid-sparing techniques (Nelson et al., 2016), emphasizing the significance of personalized pain treatment in enhancing patient comfort and recovery.[2] A randomized controlled experiment conducted by Chapron et al. (2021) shown that patients following ERAS guidelines need 40% less opioids postoperatively while achieving similar pain management outcomes.[12]

The complication rates were significantly reduced in the ERAS group, especially for surgical site infections (SSIs) and postoperative ileus. These results may be ascribed to protocol-driven treatments, including limited intravenous fluids, timely catheter removal, and immediate enteral feeding. The results corroborate those of Miralpeix et al. (2016) and are also substantiated by a comprehensive study by Wang et al. (2022), which indicated a 30% reduction in surgical site infections and a 50% decline in ileus rates among patients adhering to Enhanced Recovery After Surgery protocols.[5,13] The decrease in problems highlights the clinical and economic benefits of ERAS adoption, as shown by Pearse et al. (2019), who discovered that ERAS deployment lowered 30-day readmission rates by 15%.[14]

Patient satisfaction was markedly elevated in the ERAS group, presumably attributable to the comprehensive and patient-centered methodology of the program. Preoperative counseling, shortened fasting durations, and expedited recovery enhanced the patient experience. High satisfaction rates align with findings from previous ERAS research, including a prospective cohort study by Mackintosh et al.[15] (2021), which indicated 90% patient satisfaction with ERAS procedures against 70% in conventional therapy. This underscores the need of incorporating patient-reported outcomes into perioperative care frameworks to improve recovery experiences.

Notwithstanding these encouraging findings, the research had limitations. The single-center methodology and limited sample size may restrict generalizability, and the lack of long-term follow-up prevents evaluation of enduring recovery advantages. Future investigations should prioritize multi-center trials

including bigger cohorts and prolonged follow-up durations to substantiate these results. Furthermore, cost-effectiveness evaluations would provide further understanding of the economic implications of ERAS adoption.

CONCLUSION

This research contributes to the increasing data supporting ERAS techniques in gynecological surgery. The notable enhancements in hospitalization duration, analgesic control, complication incidence, and patient contentment strongly advocate for the broader use of ERAS in clinical practice. Future initiatives must concentrate on optimizing procedures, overcoming implementation obstacles, and assessing long-term results to optimize the advantages of improved recovery pathways.

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