Laparoscopic-Assisted Appendectomy (LAA): A Novel Advance on an Established Procedure

Laparoscopic appendectomy has been shown to be a safe alternative to open appendectomy [1–3]. However some inherent disadvantages of this procedure have prohibited its universal acceptability [4]. We have devised a “two-port modified technique” (Figure 1) for laparoscopic-assisted appendectomy (LAA) which we believe addresses these problems.

A 12-mm umbilical port is inserted using the Hasan technique. Pneumoperitoneum is achieved, and the laparoscopic camera inserted. The patient is placed in the Trendelenburg position with a 15° tilt to the left side. A 10-mm port is inserted near the McBurney point, guided by the site of the appendix or cecum, under direct vision. The appendix is identified and the diagnosis of appendicitis is established. The appendix is grasped with a nontraumatic grasper, from the distal mesentery in line with the grasper, and pulled into the port for some distance. The grasper holding the appendix and the port are delivered into the port site. The mesentery is grasped with a Babcock forceps and the port and nontraumatic grasper removed. Appendectomy is carried out in the conventional fashion, by gradually delivering the whole of the appendix (Figure 2). The cecum is dropped back into the peritoneal cavity. The cecum and stump are visualized using the camera, for checking homeostasis and security. The muscles at the site of the right iliac fossa port rarely need a suture for closure.

The disadvantages of laparoscopic appendectomy have been longer operating time [1–3] and high cost [4]. LAA inherits the advantages of both laparoscopic and open appendectomy. It can be performed in most cases, except where the appendix is very friable. We have carried out the procedure in 26 patients without complications. The theoretical possibility of wound infection is reduced by careful handling of the appendix, minimizing its contact with the wound.

A similar technique has been described previously; however in that technique, ligation of the appendicular vessels is done inside the peritoneal cavity [5]. We exteriorize the appendix with intact mesentery and complete the procedure in a conventional manner. Because of the limited intraperitoneal component of the laparo-

Figure 1 Placement of ports for laparoscopic-assisted appendectomy

Figure 2 The appendix is delivered through the port-site incision. The mesoappendix and vessels are ligated and divided, as is the appendix base

scopic procedure, LAA has a steeper learning curve. Extraperitoneal ligation of the appendix base and appendicular vessels reduces the operating time. LAA obviates the need for disposable laparoscopic instruments with the potential of reducing the costs associated with laparoscopic appendectomy.

Z. Khan, R. Mofidi, H. P. Redmond
Department of Academic Surgery,
Cork University Hospital, Wilton,
Cork, Ireland

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Corresponding Author

Z. Khan, FRCSI
Lecturer in Surgery
Cork University Hospital
117 Pace Road
Little Pace, Paddocks
Dublin 15
Ireland
Fax: +353-21-344230
E-mail: zaib@eircom.net