Reviewer's report

Title: A survey of abnormalities in the colon and rectum in patients presenting with haemorrhoids.

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Reviewer: Varghese P Thomas

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Positive points about the article:

The article gives the prevalence of colonic disease in patients with haemorrhoids in the Netherlands and the study spans over a period of 17 years. The article warns us that there could be other associated colonic diseases in patients with haemorrhoids.

Negative points

1. Title:

Title is misleading as it states that the patients presented with haemorrhoids. It is not clear from the article as to whether all the patients included in the study presented with clinical symptoms pertaining to haemorrhoidal disease or not.

The authors state in the material and methods section like this: The reasons for doing the endoscopy were the normal clinical indications in daily practice (abdominal complaints, diarrhoea, rectal bleeding, anaemia, changes in bowel habits, family history of colorectal cancer and screening). All patients in whom haemorrhoids were seen were included in the study.

Being a retrospective analysis of endoscopy records spanning 17 years, it is unlikely that the authors could have obtained enough clinical data on presenting symptoms with specific reference to symptoms of ano-rectal diseases.

2. Methodology:

The methodology also has flaws. Out of 1910 cases, colonoscopy was done in 1777 cases and only flexible sigmoidoscopy was done in 133 cases. The authors could have omitted the latter cases who had undergone flexible sigmoidoscopy only. The inclusion of latter cases violates the aim of the study. This is a major error as the findings in 133 cases could have significantly altered the final results. The caecal intubation rates for the present study were 84.4% in group I and 88% in group II. Though this may be acceptable for clinical use, those cases in which colonoscopy were incomplete could have been avoided in this study with the exceptions of cases in which further introduction of the scope was not possible due to a cicatrizing lesion.

3. Discussion
The authors’ observations that various colonic diseases other than colitis were more often seen in elderly patients is a well established fact. The observations in their study do not add anything new to the existing knowledge regarding the prevalence of colonic disease. The authors have already published data regarding other associated abnormalities seen in patients presenting with haemorrhoids. Moreover the authors also performed colonoscopy in their cases even though some of their patients could have presented with symptoms suggestive of haemorrhoidal disease. The indications for doing colonoscopy is well established now and it is unlikely that the observations in this article will change it. There is very little discussion on the prevalence of other colonic lesions in patients with haemorrhoids and the review of literature is inadequate.

4. The message from the article is not clear.
Should we do colonoscopy even if the patient presents with clear cut symptoms and signs of ano-rectal disease? Or should we advocate colonoscopy only in persons above the age of 50 years even if they have symptoms of ano-rectal disease? This should have been answered clearly with the analysis of presenting symptoms and clinical findings against colonoscopic observations. If the authors have details of clinical presentations of their patients, this paper could be rewritten with those details and it will definitely give more information regarding the utility of performing colonoscopy in patients presenting with symptoms of haemorrhoidal disease.

**Level of interest:** An article of limited interest

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**
I do not have any competing interests