Reviewer's report

Title: The Belsey Mark IV: An operation with an enduring role in the management of complicated hiatal hernia.

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Reviewer: Hasan Batirel

Reviewer's report:

Belsey Mark IV operation is a well established technique in the treatment of GERD and paraesophageal hernia. The paper reports 15 patients treated with this technique and the authors applied the technique carefully and elegantly. My comments are below.

1. Marked obesity, large paraesophageal hernias, redo hiatal hernias or short esophagus are not a contraindication to laparoscopy. Most of those cases, even with total intrathoracic stomach, can be safely managed with laparoscopy, thus these conditions would not constitute a routine indication for a Belsey Mark IV via left thoracotomy.

2. Half of the patients reported some pain or discomfort at the thoracotomy site during follow up, which is expected. However laparoscopy is very rarely associated with a continuous pain or discomfort.

3. The cited Coosemans paper was published in 1997 and most of the centers in Europe and North America have also shifted their practice to laparoscopy and uses thoracic approach in very selected cases.

4. Although the authors have a correct argument regarding the place of transthoracic Belsey Mark IV or Collis Belsey operations, these indications are not new and every surgeon dealing with esophageal surgery should be familiar with these techniques (transthoracic or laparoscopic).

The indication for a transthoracic approach in these situations are getting rare and in the current surgical era, every surgeon has to get trained for advanced minimally invasive techniques. Thus I think advocating a well established, but relatively old technique for situations which can be handled with advanced minimally invasive surgery is not justified and would not attract much interest.

Level of interest: An article of insufficient interest to warrant publication in a scientific/medical journal

Quality of written English: Acceptable

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

Declaration of competing interests:
No conflict of interest