Reviewer’s report

Title: The analgesic efficacy of subcostal transversus abdominis plane block with Mercedes incision

Version: 0 Date: 20 May 2017

Reviewer: Jaime Ortiz

Reviewer's report:

Overall I find this study very interesting and well performed. The manuscript reads easily and well organized.

A few questions that I would like addressed.

When doing the power calculation, you looked at intraop sufentanyl use as the measure. Any data on postop data from your initial pilot? How about 24 hour sufentanyl use? I think using 24 hour sufentanyl as a starting point for the sample size and power calculation may have given higher number of patients needed. In addition, since the sample size was calculated from difference in intraop sufentanyl, the only clinically significant conclusions only apply to the intraop period. It is not easy to extrapolate that enough patients were studied for the postop outcomes, even up to 4 hours, or when the block wears off.

Most of the results show some minor difference up to 4 hours after surgery, but although statistically significant, I don't know how clinically relevant they really are. Not much difference seen at 24 hours. You expect some benefit from ANY intervention when compared to placebo. I would prefer a comparison to epidural. Unless there is known contraindication, that is still the primary mode of analgesia I use for these patient in my practice.

How about other outcomes? Recovery, discharge from hospital, complications from surgery? Any changes to those. I suspect the sample size is too small to see any clinical difference in those.

When presenting the results, you excluded 10 patients due to a variety of reasons. Other than lost data, all of those patients, if they received the blocks, should be included. Factors such as failed block, prolonged surgery, increased blood loss, post op ventilation are normal variant for these surgeries. All data should be included. We can't just remove non-perfect patients from the analysis. Intention to treat should be followed.

In any case, I believe this is a solid manuscript but would benefit from improvement as noted above.
Are the methods appropriate and well described?
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Does the work include the necessary controls?
If not, please specify which controls are required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?
If not, please explain in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Are you able to assess any statistics in the manuscript or would you recommend an additional statistical review?
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I am able to assess the statistics

Quality of written English
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Needs some language corrections before being published

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