Reviewer’s report

Title: Sciatic obturator femoral technique versus spinal anaesthesia in patients undergoing surgery for fixation of open tibial fractures using Ilizarov external fixator. A randomised trial

Version: 1 Date: 17 Oct 2019

Reviewer: raffaele aspide


Thanks to the Authors for the excellent work they have done on a very sensitive subject. I read this randomized trial with great interest. The study has collected the data in a thorough and correct manner, carried out a good analysis of the results, although it is not completely clear to me, the analysis of the results. I hope with this my review to support the Authors to publish this paper. Attached you find your manuscript with some comments

1) Methods: pag 3 line 61, are the enrolled patients consecutive or not

2) Methods: pag 4 line 15, are the patients in urgency/emergency procedures or elective surgery?

3) Methods: pag 4 line 31, Astra Zenica ? or Astrazeneca ?

4) Methods: pag 4 line 38, before SOFT block no superficial anesthetic wheal were perfomed?

5) Methods: pag 4 line 54, Astra Zenica ? or Astrazeneca ?

6) Methods: pag 5 first line, no other twitches before the injection for the other blocks during SOFT? Please, explain better

7) Methods: pag 5 line 6, what do you mean exactly for "evaluating for 20 min? after completing it? is it 25 min the duration of the SOFT block? Please, explain better
8) Methods: pag 5 line 17, may you insert in the text which is the success rate of the block?

9) Secondary endpoints: I think that back pain and post-dural puncture headache are proper of spinal anesthesia, looking to your results (table 2) are respectively 0% and 2% in SOFT group, are you sure to insert them in to the endpoints?

10) Methods: pag 5 line 52, which is the percentage of failure of the block?

11) Results: pag 6 line 31, vital data perhaps better "vital signs"

12) Results: pag 6 line 39-41, mistake even looking the table 2: are "hours" not minutes!

13) Results: pag 6 line 48, again Results about headache incidence…idem

14) Discussion: pag 7 the great limitation in the clinical utility of this study is the fact that spinal anesthesia is a widespread method and that anesthesiologists have great practice, while SOFT block is a new, complex technique, which includes a learning curve. The authors have the merit of having applied it correctly and on a significant sample size, but it is absolutely necessary not to forget the difficulty of learning and therefore the diffusion of an alternative technique. Furthermore, the longer duration of the anesthetic procedure has a non-negligible incidence in the management of an entire surgical session, especially in an urgent context. In my opinion, these observations should be included in the discussion or partially in the limitations.

15) Discussion: please, underline the novelty of this study compared with to other studies included in to the discussion, probably the power ????

16) Conclusion: line 40, I think that "SOFT block is a feasible technique for control of postoperative…" can be better if start from the idea the SOFT block is a "….feasible technique of local anesthesia…."

17) Table 1: last line, probably you mean "surgical procedure duration"…. Or total duration ? please, specify

18) Table 3: I think that VAS results are interesting and useful to stress/underline in the analysis of the results
19) Fig 1: I didn't find the caption, I am unable to assess/read the image, please, describe better the figure, even adding a figure of the injection technique.

20) Fig.2: please, describe well this figure adding a caption and changing the color of the outline, I really don't understand "LA Local Anesthetic".

21) Fig.3: please, insert in to the flow chart the steps of the follow up in hours, probably can describe better the work you did.

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?
If an additional statistical review is recommended, please specify what aspects require further assessment in your comments to the editors.

I am able to assess the statistics

Quality of written English
Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Acceptable
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