Preoperative Patient Education in Elective Spinal Surgery

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Aims: Patient education (PE) has been employed by many authorities in order to deal with patient anxiety, pain control and overall satisfaction. While the literature suggests its effectiveness in joint reconstruction, data are missing in spine surgery. The purpose of this study is to report on the effectiveness of PE in patients undergoing elective spinal surgery.

Methods: We retrospectively analyzed the data on patients that underwent PE (Spine Precare Class) from October 2009 to March 2010. All patients that were discharged home throughout the study period, were called whether they participated in the class or not, with emphasis placed on their satisfaction with the nursing care and overall pain management. 155 patients accepted to participate to the phone survey, 60 males and 86 females (55.5%). Mean age was 55 years (range: 25-84). They all underwent elective spinal surgery, with admitting diagnosis of cervical and lumbar discogenic pain being the most prevalent. Of the 155 patients surveyed, 77 (49.6%) had attended the PreCare educational class that was offered by the hospital while 78 (50.3%) did not attend the class. Groups where compared to determine if class attendance made a difference in terms of overall satisfaction and pain management satisfaction (X2). Univariate analysis (Fisher's exact test) and multivariate analysis (logistic regression) was performed to determine whether factors such as age and sex affected the outcome. Differences were considered significant at p=0.05 level.

Results: 97% of the participants in the PreCare class were satisfied with their pain management vs. 83.3% in the control group (p=0.02). There was also a non-significant trend for better overall satisfaction in the precare class group (90.9% vs. 84.6%). In the subgroup analysis (univariate) males had a higher group satisfaction than females (p=0.04). Also those patients in 65-74 years age group were positively affected by education (p=0.02).

Conclusions: The implementation of our Spine PreCare program has had a positive impact on patient satisfaction, especially in terms of pain management. Patient education represents a viable, efficient and inexpensive intervention in patients undergoing spinal surgery.