National Trends in Surgery for Sinonasal Malignancy and the Effect of Hospital Volume on Short Term Outcomes

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**Abstract**

Objective/Hypothesis: Sinonasal carcinomas are a collection of highly morbid neoplasms originating from the nasopharynx and paranasal sinuses. Over the last two decades, combinations of surgery, radiation, and chemotherapy have been used to treat sinonasal malignancies. We sought to characterize the trends in initial management of sinonasal malignancy and the impact of hospital volume on surgical care and outcomes.

Methods: We performed a retrospective cohort study with time trends of patients admitted for surgical resection of sinonasal malignancy in the National Inpatient Sample (NIS) between 1988 and 2009. Subset analysis was performed on patient cohorts with skull base involvement, orbital or maxillary sinus involvement, or requirement for radical neck dissection. Patient characteristics as well as hospital attributes were correlated with patient morbidity and mortality.

Results: Over the course of 22 years, we identified 3850 cases of sinonasal surgery patients from 879 hospitals. 14.9% of patients had complications and 0.8% of hospitalizations resulted in mortality. Older age was associated with higher morbidity and mortality. Cardiopulmonary complications, including pulmonary collapse and myocardial infarction, and infectious causes, most commonly urinary tract infection and surgical site infection, accounted for 41.5% and 25.7%, respectively, of all complications. Hemorrhagic complications requiring transfusion were also present in 16.1% of cases associated with complications.

Cases including neck dissection, orbital or maxillary sinus involvement, or skull base involvement were associated with higher rates of morbidity and mortality. 24.4% of these high-risk surgeries were associated with complications, compared to 11.3% of cases without extra-sinonasal involvement. We identified 32 hospitals that averaged more than 5 cases per year and accounted for 28% (1097) of all sinonasal surgeries. These hospitals were likewise overrepresented in high risk cases – accounting for 32.4% of cases requiring neck dissection, 44.9% of cases with orbital involvement, and 45.7% of cases with skull base involvement.

Conclusions: This study reflects changing trends in the primary management of sinonasal cancer, with a increased likelihood for initial surgery at higher-volume hospitals. Complicated cases resulted in higher rates of complications but were not associated with higher mortality. Higher complication rates were seen at higher volume hospitals, but this finding was associated with an overrepresentation in the management of complex cases.

**Introduction**

Sinonasal carcinomas are a collection of highly morbid neoplasms originating from the nasopharynx and paranasal sinuses. These cancers are typically of epithelial cell origin, with the majority being squamous cell carcinomas, although a wide range of tumors can originate from the sinonasal cavities. Sinonasal carcinomas are typically initially asymptomatic, but local invasion can result in a constellation of symptoms including chronic nasal discharge, epistaxis, congestion, anosmia, neuropathies, edema, and visual disturbances. It is relatively uncommon for sinonasal cancers to present with lymph node or distant metastases, but they do frequently present with anatomically advanced disease due to proximity to the orbits and skull base.

Sinonasal cancers are uncommon – accounting for only between 1 – 3% of head and neck cancers [1,2]. Given the low incidence and heterogenous histology of sinonasal cancers, there are no randomized trials indicating the optimal management. Primary treatment of sinonasal cancers can include a program of radiotherapy with or without chemotherapy upfront or in combination or may be treated with initial surgical resection and postoperative radiotherapy with or without chemotherapy. Although there is a high incidence of local recurrence, there is insufficient high-level evidence to suggest the superiority of either approach.

A few institutions have published their experiences with sinonasal cancers [1,3,4,5,6,7], but these institutional case series each have fewer than 75 patients and represent different perspectives in treatment era and overall approach to sinonasal cancers. An early case series from the University of Florida reviews the experience with a primarily radiotherapy-only approach, with 52% 5-year actuarial survival [3], while a more recent case series from the M.D. Anderson Cancer Center with more inclusion of surgery and post-operative radiotherapy achieved 82% 5-year survival. Case studies have suggested a rate of local recurrence of 28-41% and 5-year actuarial survival rates of 40-82%.

Given the limited individual institutional experiences with sinonasal cancer and the incomplete understanding of surgery in initial management, we sought to examine contemporary patterns of sinonasal cancer surgery. In this study, through analysis of a national inpatient database, we investigate the surgical outcomes of patients who underwent sinonasal cancer surgery and evaluate the impact of hospital volume on short-term outcomes.

**Materials and Methods**

**Data Source**

A retrospective cross-sectional analysis of patients who underwent surgical resection of primary cancer of nasal cavities and paranasal sinuses was performed using data from the National Inpatient Sample (NIS) from the Healthcare Cost and Utilization Project, Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality. The NIS is the largest database of all-payer inpatient discharge information, sampling approximately 20% of all non-federal US hospitals and including approximately 9 million hospital admissions each year. Each NIS entry includes all diagnosis and procedure codes of activity during the patient’s hospitalization at the time of discharge as well as patient demographics, hospital characteristics, and short-term complications of the hospitalization.

**Data Extraction**

All available data from 1988 through 2009 were queried. Patients admitted for primary head and neck cancer with a primary procedure of surgical resection in the maxillary, frontal, ethmoid, or sphenoid sinuses were identified. Higher-risk surgeries were identified by orbital or skull base involvement as well as surgeries requiring neck dissection. Incidences of in-hospital mortality as well perioperative morbidity such as post-operative infections, cardiopulmonary complications, hemorrhagic complications, nerve palsies, and deep vein thrombosis were identified.

**Statistical Analysis**

The total number of hospitalizations was plotted annually from 1988 to 2009 and hospital volume was also assessed for each hospital in the database. Hospital-level data was stratified by hospital caseload to compare complication rates between high- and low-volume hospitals. The Pearson chi-square test was used to analyze differences in low-volume and high-volume hospitals as well as differences in complication rates. Logistic regression models were used to assess the influence of patient demographics and hospital characteristics on complication rates. All analyses were performed using Python 2.7 (Python Software Foundation, www.python.org) and R 2.13 (R Foundation, www.r-project.org).

**Results**

We identified 3850 cases of sinonasal surgery between 1988 and 2009 (Figure 1). Patients had a mean age of 61 years old and stayed on average 6.8 days in the hospital. Consistent with previous accounts, we found a male predominance, comprising 57.2% of all patients. The volume of sinonasal cancer surgery has not changed appreciably over the last twenty years, but a greater proportion of these surgeries are now being performed at higher-volume centers (Figure 1, R2 = 0.268, p > 0.001).

??These have not changed over time??

In order to investigate the impact of surgical volume on short-term outcomes, we separated hospitals into centers that perform relatively higher numbers of sinonasal cancer surgery cases (greater than 5 cases per year) and centers that performed relatively few sinonasal cancer surgery cases (less than 5 cases per year). We identified 32 hospitals which averaged more than 5 cases per year and accounted for 28% of all sinonasal surgery cases. These hospitals were more frequently represented in high-risk cases, accounting for 32.4% of cases requiring neck dissection, 44.9% of cases with orbital involvement, and 45.7% of cases with skull base involvement, despite comprising only 3.6% of all hospitals that performed sinonasal cancer surgery (Table 2). High-volume centers tended to be teaching hospitals (P > 0.001), and large, urban hospitals were also more represented (Table 3). THESE LAST FEW SENTENCES BEG THE QUESTION – WHAT HAPPENS WHEN A HIGH RISK CASE IS DONE AT A LOW VOLUME HOSPITAL?

Less than 1% of hospitalizations resulted in short-term mortality and 36.9% of patients had complications ranging from neuropathies and visual impairment to infections and cardiopulmonary arrest (Table 4). Cardiopulmonary complications were the most common class of complications, representing about half of all complications, while visual defects and neuropathies directly resulting from the surgery was present in a minority of cases. Cases including neck dissection, orbital or maxillary sinus involvement, or skull base involvement had higher rates of morbidity and mortality. Among these high-risk surgeries, 24.4% resulted in complications, compared to 11.3% of cases without such extra-sinonasal intervention.

**TABLES? FIGURES? ADD THESE IN AT APPROPRIATE POINTS**

**Figure 1: Percentage of Low- and High-Volume Hospital Management over Time (by Year) – you already made this, looks nice**

**Figure 2: Rate of High-Risk Surgeries over Time (by Year)**

**Figure 3: Rate of Complications over Time (by Year)**

**Figure 4: Rate of Surgery-Related Mortality over time (by Year)**

**Discussion**

Sinonasal cancers are a highly heterogeneous collection of morbid neoplasms often initially treated with surgery and adjuvant radiotherapy. Initially, these cancers can be clinically silent or mimic benign disease such as sinusitis or upper respiratory infections, as evidenced by a relatively high proportion of locally advanced extent at presentation. This study confirms the prevalence of advanced initial presentation, shown by the fact that 20.2% of surgeries in this database were classified as high-risk.

High-volume institutions provide care for more high-risk cases, but there was no statistically significant difference in the mortality rate between high- and low-volume centers.

One limitation of this study is that the National Inpatient Sample does not keep track of long-term outcomes from these hospitalizations. While we were able to show there is little perioperative mortality (0.8%), we were unable to examine long-term survival or complications. Further investigation would be necessary to compare the efficacy of various treatment options.

THIS IS REALLY VERY GOOD, NEED TO ADD IN MORE REFERENCES TO EXISTING LITERATURE

Need to discuss trends

No change in patient demographics over time

Has staging changed? Look at literature to see if there are trends for lower stage at presentation, suspect there might be

discuss higher rates of complex surgeries taking place recently, this is because of advances in surgical technique, e.g. more integrated approach to the skull base with neurosurgery support, better postop management of infection/abscess, trends in endoscopic surgery with more complex cases

discuss higher rates of referral to high volume, experienced centers – mention appropriateness in light of other complex conditions which are being referred to experienced centers, e.g. Gourin data on better outcomes at large volume centers, data showing surgical experience is related to better outcomes

reduced mortality? Discuss the fact that larger surgeries are being done with relatively little mortality

awesome job so far!!!

[1] MDACC <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed?term=18164845> n = 62

[2] Barnes L, Tse LLY, Hunt JL, et al. Tumours of the nasal cavity and paranasal sinuses: Introduction. In: Pathology and Genetics of Head and Neck Tumours, Barnes L, Eveson JW, Reichart P, Sidransky D. (Eds), IARC, Lyon 2005. p.9.

[3] FLORIDA <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/3335447/> n = 48

[4] DENMARK <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed?term=20001493> n = 242

[5] UCLA <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/11753979>

[6] WASHU <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/2846481> n = 62

[7] Earlier Denmark <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/11321654> n = 315

<http://www.uptodate.com/contents/paranasal-sinus-cancer?source=search_result&search=sinonasal+cancer&selectedTitle=1%7E150>

<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/lary.22447/full>