

Optimizing Postoperative Care for Dental Surgery Patients through Pharmacist and Nursing Support

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Abstract

Effective postoperative care following dental surgery is essential for optimal recovery, encompassing pain management, complication prevention, and patient compliance. This study investigates the impact of multidisciplinary care involving pharmacists and nurses on postoperative outcomes for dental surgery patients in a tertiary hospital. A mixed-methods approach was utilized, involving 150 patients divided into an intervention group (receiving pharmacist and nursing support) and a control group (receiving standard care). Quantitative findings showed significantly lower pain scores, reduced complication rates, and higher medication adherence in the intervention group compared to the control group. Qualitative analysis revealed themes of enhanced pain management, improved communication and education, and increased patient satisfaction. The results suggest that incorporating pharmacists and nurses into postoperative care improves outcomes and enhances patient experiences. The integration of these professionals should be considered best practice for optimizing recovery in dental surgery patients.

Keywords: Postoperative Care, Dental Surgery, Multidisciplinary Care, Pharmacist, Nurse, Pain Management, Patient Satisfaction

Introduction

Effective postoperative care is critical in ensuring successful outcomes following dental surgery. Optimal postoperative management includes pain control, prevention of complications, and ensuring patient compliance with prescribed care protocols. Traditionally, postoperative care has been managed primarily by the dentist; however, incorporating pharmacists and nurses into the care team has been shown to enhance patient outcomes and satisfaction (Meyer and Miers, 2005). Pharmacists play a pivotal role in medication management, including optimizing analgesics and antibiotics, ensuring appropriate dosing, and minimizing potential drug interactions, which are particularly prevalent in polypharmacy patients (Kwan and Farrell, 2013). Nurses, on the other hand, are instrumental in providing continuous patient monitoring, managing postoperative complications, and offering patient education, particularly regarding wound care and hygiene (Suhonen and Leino-Kilpi, 2006).

Recent studies have emphasized the benefits of multidisciplinary collaboration in healthcare, highlighting how such an approach can result in more comprehensive patient care (Sierchio, 2003). In the context of dental surgery, involving pharmacists and nurses can lead to improved pain management, better adherence to prescribed postoperative regimens, and a reduction in the incidence of complications such as infection (Ng et al., 2012). By working collaboratively, the dentist, pharmacist, and nurse can address different facets

of postoperative care, offering a more holistic approach that takes into account both medical and patient-centered considerations (Tevis and Kennedy, 2013).

Despite these potential benefits, the integration of pharmacists and nurses in postoperative dental care has not been widely studied or implemented in many healthcare settings. This study aims to explore the role of pharmacist and nursing support in optimizing postoperative outcomes for dental surgery patients, with a focus on pain management, complication prevention, and patient satisfaction.

Literature Review

The literature indicates that postoperative care is a crucial component of successful dental surgery outcomes, with pain control, prevention of complications, and patient adherence being key aspects (Meyer and Miers, 2005). Traditional approaches to postoperative management have primarily involved dentists, but an emerging body of evidence supports the inclusion of other healthcare professionals, such as pharmacists and nurses, in enhancing patient care (Sierchio, 2003).

Pharmacists have been shown to play an essential role in the optimization of medication management, which includes ensuring appropriate dosing, minimizing adverse drug interactions, and providing patient education regarding medication use (Kwan and Farrell, 2013). In the context of postoperative dental care, pharmacists' contributions are particularly valuable in managing analgesics and antibiotics, which are commonly prescribed following dental procedures (Ng et al., 2012). Studies have demonstrated that pharmacist intervention in medication reconciliation and management can significantly reduce the risk of adverse events and improve patient compliance with treatment regimens (Meyer and Miers, 2005).

Nurses also have a critical role in postoperative care, particularly in patient education, wound management, and monitoring for complications (Suhonen and Leino-Kilpi, 2006). The presence of nursing support has been associated with improved postoperative outcomes, including better wound healing and reduced rates of infection (Tevis and Kennedy, 2013). Nurses are well-positioned to provide continuous monitoring and address patient concerns, which helps in managing anxiety and ensuring adherence to postoperative instructions. Suhonen and Leino-Kilpi (2006) highlighted the importance of nursing care in postoperative recovery, emphasizing that effective communication and education can significantly enhance patient satisfaction and overall recovery.

The concept of multidisciplinary collaboration in healthcare has gained significant attention in recent years. Sierchio (2003) explored the benefits of such collaboration, noting that comprehensive patient care requires the combined expertise of multiple healthcare professionals. In the context of dental surgery, involving pharmacists and nurses in the postoperative care team has led to improved patient outcomes, particularly in pain management and complication prevention (Ng et al., 2012). By working together, the dentist, pharmacist, and nurse can provide a more holistic approach to care, addressing both the clinical and emotional needs of the patient (Tevis and Kennedy, 2013).

Despite the growing evidence supporting the benefits of multidisciplinary care, the integration of pharmacists and nurses into postoperative dental care remains limited in practice. One of the primary barriers is the lack of established protocols for such collaboration, as well as insufficient awareness among dental professionals of the potential benefits of including pharmacists and nurses in the care team (Sierchio, 2003). Further research is needed to establish best practices for multidisciplinary collaboration and to explore the specific roles that pharmacists and nurses can play in improving postoperative outcomes.

This study aims to fill this gap by investigating the impact of pharmacist and nursing support on postoperative outcomes in dental surgery patients. Specifically, the study will focus on pain management, complication prevention, and patient satisfaction, with the goal of providing evidence to support the integration of these healthcare professionals into routine postoperative dental care.

Methodology

This study was conducted in a tertiary hospital setting. A mixed-methods approach was utilized to gather both quantitative and qualitative data on the impact of pharmacist and nursing support on postoperative outcomes for dental surgery patients. The study population included adult patients (aged 18 and above) who underwent dental surgery during this period. Patients were recruited through the hospital's dental surgery department, and informed consent was obtained prior to participation.

A total of 150 patients were included in the study. The participants were divided into two groups: the intervention group, which received postoperative care involving pharmacists and nurses, and the control group, which received standard postoperative care managed solely by the dentist. The intervention group had pharmacists involved in medication management, including analgesics and antibiotics, while nurses provided patient education, wound care, and continuous monitoring. The control group received postoperative care that included pain management and follow-up visits conducted by the dentist.

Quantitative data were collected through patient medical records, including information on pain scores, complication rates, and medication adherence. Pain was assessed using the Visual Analog Scale (VAS) at three points: immediately after surgery, 48 hours post-surgery, and one week post-surgery. Complication rates, including infection and delayed wound healing, were documented throughout the follow-up period. Medication adherence was measured by tracking whether patients followed their prescribed medication regimen as instructed.

Qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews with a subset of 30 patients from each group. These interviews were conducted one month after surgery to explore patients' experiences with their postoperative care. Questions focused on pain management, satisfaction with care, and perceived quality of communication and support provided by healthcare professionals. Interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and analyzed thematically to identify common themes related to patient satisfaction and the effectiveness of multidisciplinary care.

Data analysis involved comparing the outcomes between the intervention and control groups. Quantitative data were analyzed using statistical software, with descriptive statistics used to summarize the data and inferential statistics (t-tests and chi-square tests) used to determine significant differences between groups. Qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify patterns in patient experiences and satisfaction with postoperative care.

Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the hospital's ethics committee. All participants were assured of confidentiality, and their participation was voluntary, with the option to withdraw at any point without any impact on their treatment.

Findings

Quantitative Findings

The quantitative analysis showed significant differences between the intervention and control groups in terms of pain scores, complication rates, and medication adherence. The results are summarized in the tables below.

| Outcome Measure | Intervention Group (n=75) | Control Group (n=75) | p-value |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------|---------|
| Pain Score (VAS) | | | |
| Immediately after surgery | 4.2 ±1.1 | 5.8 ±1.3 | <0.01 |
| 48 hours post-surgery | 3.1 ±0.9 | 4.7 ±1.2 | <0.01 |
| One week post-surgery | 1.5 ±0.7 | 3.0 ±0.8 | <0.01 |
| Complication Rate | | | |
| Infection | 5 (6.7%) | 15 (20%) | 0.02 |
| Delayed wound healing | 3 (4%) | 10 (13.3%) | 0.04 |
| Medication Adherence | | | |
| Adherence to medication regimen | 65 (86.7%) | 50 (66.7%) | 0.01 |

The intervention group, which received pharmacist and nursing support, reported significantly lower pain scores at all time points, fewer complications, and higher rates of medication adherence compared to the control group.

Qualitative Findings

The qualitative analysis identified several themes and sub-themes related to patient experiences with postoperative care. These themes are presented below, along with representative quotes from participants.

Theme 1: Enhanced Pain Management

- Sub-theme 1.1: Timely Pain Relief

- "The pharmacist made sure I understood when to take my pain medications, and that made a big difference in keeping the pain under control." (Participant 5, Intervention Group)

- "Having a nurse check in on me and adjust my pain relief plan when needed really helped." (Participant 12, Intervention Group)

- Sub-theme 1.2: Individualized Pain Management

- "They adjusted my medications based on how I was feeling, which made me feel more comfortable." (Participant 9, Intervention Group)

Theme 2: Improved Communication and Education

- Sub-theme 2.1: Clarity in Instructions

- "The nurse explained everything about wound care, and it was easy to follow." (Participant 18, Intervention Group)
- "I felt more confident because the pharmacist took the time to explain my medications." (Participant 25, Intervention Group)

- Sub-theme 2.2: Ongoing Support

- "I could call the nurse if I had questions, and they were always available." (Participant 7, Intervention Group)
- "The pharmacist followed up to check if I was experiencing any side effects." (Participant 14, Intervention Group)

Theme 3: Patient Satisfaction

- Sub-theme 3.1: Feeling Cared For

- "Having both a nurse and a pharmacist made me feel like my care was important." (Participant 21, Intervention Group)
- "I appreciated the extra attention to detail, which made my recovery smoother." (Participant 28, Intervention Group)

- Sub-theme 3.2: Reduced Anxiety

- "Knowing there were multiple professionals looking after me reduced my anxiety a lot." (Participant 10, Intervention Group)

The qualitative findings suggest that the involvement of pharmacists and nurses in postoperative care contributed to better pain management, improved patient education, and greater overall satisfaction with care.

Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate the significant impact of pharmacist and nursing support on postoperative outcomes for dental surgery patients. The intervention group, which received care from pharmacists and nurses in addition to the dentist, showed markedly improved outcomes compared to the control group. Specifically, the intervention group reported lower pain scores, reduced complication rates, and higher adherence to medication regimens, highlighting the value of multidisciplinary care in enhancing postoperative recovery.

One of the most notable findings was the reduction in pain scores among patients who received pharmacist and nursing support. The involvement of pharmacists in optimizing pain medication regimens and providing patient education on medication use likely contributed to better pain management outcomes. Nurses also played a crucial role in monitoring patients and adjusting care plans as needed, which helped ensure that pain relief measures were effective. These results align with previous studies that emphasize the role of pharmacists and nurses in providing individualized and timely pain management (Meyer and Miers, 2005; Suhonen and Leino-Kilpi, 2006).

The lower rates of complications, such as infection and delayed wound healing, in the intervention group further underscore the importance of multidisciplinary collaboration. Nurses' involvement in wound care and patient education on hygiene practices likely contributed to these positive outcomes. Previous research has highlighted the role of nurses in preventing postoperative complications through effective patient

education and monitoring (Tevis and Kennedy, 2013). By providing continuous support, nurses helped patients adhere to wound care protocols, which may have reduced the risk of complications.

Medication adherence was significantly higher in the intervention group, which can be attributed to the involvement of pharmacists in medication management and patient education. Pharmacists provided clear instructions on medication use, addressed potential drug interactions, and ensured that patients understood the importance of adherence. This finding is consistent with previous studies that have shown the positive impact of pharmacist-led interventions on medication adherence, particularly in patients with complex medication regimens (Kwan and Farrell, 2013). Improved medication adherence is critical in preventing complications and ensuring optimal recovery, particularly in the context of postoperative care.

The qualitative findings provide further insight into the benefits of pharmacist and nursing support from the patients' perspective. Patients in the intervention group reported feeling more supported and informed, which contributed to greater overall satisfaction with their care. Themes such as enhanced pain management, improved communication and education, and reduced anxiety highlight the importance of patient-centered care and the value of multidisciplinary collaboration in addressing both clinical and emotional needs. The ability of nurses and pharmacists to provide ongoing support and clear instructions helped patients feel more confident in managing their recovery, which may have contributed to better adherence to postoperative care protocols.

Despite the positive outcomes observed in this study, there are some limitations that should be considered. The study was conducted in a single tertiary hospital, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other settings. Additionally, the sample size, while sufficient to detect significant differences, could be expanded in future studies to further validate the results. Future research should also explore the cost-effectiveness of integrating pharmacists and nurses into postoperative dental care, as well as the long-term impact on patient outcomes.

In conclusion, this study provides strong evidence for the benefits of incorporating pharmacists and nurses into the postoperative care team for dental surgery patients. The findings highlight the value of a multidisciplinary approach in improving pain management, reducing complications, and enhancing patient satisfaction. By working collaboratively, dentists, pharmacists, and nurses can provide more comprehensive and patient-centered care, ultimately leading to better postoperative outcomes. The integration of pharmacists and nurses into routine postoperative care should be considered as a best practice to optimize recovery and improve patient experiences.

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