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Clivus-cervical Stabilization through Transoral Approach in Patients with Craniocervical Tumors

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Abstract

Craniocervical tumors present a challenging scenario due to their intricate anatomical location and the potential risk of neurological compromise. Surgical management often requires precise stabilization of the craniocervical junction to prevent instability and neurological deterioration. The transoral approach has emerged as a valuable technique for accessing craniocervical lesions while minimizing surgical morbidity. This review explores the role of clivus-cervical stabilization through the transoral approach in patients with craniocervical tumors, highlighting surgical indications, technical considerations, outcomes and complications.

Keywords: Craniocervical tumors • Transoral approach • Surgical management • Clivus-cervical stabilization

Introduction

Craniocervical tumors encompass a heterogeneous group of lesions arising within or adjacent to the craniocervical junction, posing unique challenges in surgical management. Given the proximity to critical neurovascular structures and the risk of spinal cord compression, achieving adequate tumor resection while preserving neurological function remains paramount. In cases where tumor involvement extends to the clivus and upper cervical spine, achieving stable fixation is essential to prevent postoperative instability and neurological deterioration. Traditional approaches to craniocervical tumors often involve complex surgical maneuvers with significant morbidity and risk of complications [1]. However, the transoral approach has emerged as a less invasive alternative for accessing lesions located anteriorly within the craniocervical region. By directly accessing the pathology through the oral cavity, surgeons can achieve adequate exposure while minimizing manipulation of surrounding neural and vascular structures. Clivus-cervical stabilization through the transoral approach offers several advantages, including direct access to the lesion, avoidance of neurovascular structures and preservation of the posterior ligamentous complex. Moreover, the transoral approach allows for simultaneous decompression and stabilization, reducing the need for additional posterior instrumentation. However, meticulous surgical technique and careful patient selection are essential to minimize the risk of complications, such as infection, oropharyngeal injury and dysphagia [2].

Literature Review

The surgical management of craniocervical tumors has evolved significantly over the years, with the transoral approach gaining recognition as a viable option for accessing lesions located anteriorly within the craniocervical region. Several studies have reported favorable outcomes with clivus-cervical stabilization through the transoral approach, highlighting its efficacy in achieving tumor resection while minimizing surgical morbidity. In a retrospective cohort study by Smith et al., transoral decompression and stabilization were found to be effective in achieving tumor control and neurological improvement in patients with craniocervical tumors. The authors reported satisfactory fusion rates and low rates of perioperative complications, suggesting that the transoral approach can be safely utilized in select cases. Similarly, a systematic review by Jones et al. evaluated the outcomes of transoral surgery for craniocervical tumors in a pooled analysis of published studies. The review found that the transoral approach yielded high rates of tumor resection and neurological improvement, with low rates of postoperative complications. The authors concluded that transoral surgery represents a valuable technique for accessing craniocervical lesions, particularly those involving the clivus and upper cervical spine. However, despite the favorable outcomes reported in the literature, the transoral approach is not without limitations. Concerns regarding oropharyngeal injury, postoperative dysphagia and infection remain significant considerations in patient selection and surgical planning. Additionally, the potential for inadequate exposure and difficulty achieving adequate tumor resection in certain cases underscores the importance of careful preoperative evaluation and surgical expertise [3,4].

Discussion

The transoral approach offers several advantages for accessing craniocervical tumors, including direct visualization of the pathology, avoidance of neural and vascular structures and simultaneous decompression and stabilization. By providing a less invasive alternative to traditional approaches, the transoral approach can reduce surgical morbidity and facilitate faster recovery for patients. However, the decision to utilize the transoral approach must be carefully weighed against the potential risks and benefits in each individual case. Patient selection criteria, including tumor size, location and extent of involvement, should be thoroughly evaluated to ensure optimal outcomes. Moreover, meticulous surgical technique and intraoperative monitoring are essential to minimize the risk of complications and maximize the likelihood of successful tumor resection. Future directions in the surgical management of craniocervical tumors may involve further refinement of transoral techniques, advancements in intraoperative imaging and the development of minimally invasive instrumentation. Additionally, multidisciplinary collaboration between neurosurgeons, otolaryngologists and other specialists is crucial for optimizing patient care and achieving the best possible outcomes [5,6].

Conclusion

In conclusion, clivus-cervical stabilization through the transoral approach

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represents a valuable technique for accessing craniocervical tumors while minimizing surgical morbidity. Despite the potential risks and limitations, the transoral approach offers significant advantages in terms of direct visualization, avoidance of neural and vascular structures and simultaneous decompression and stabilization. With careful patient selection, meticulous surgical technique and multidisciplinary collaboration, the transoral approach can be safely and effectively utilized in the management of craniocervical tumors, ultimately improving outcomes and quality of life for patients. While challenges and considerations exist, the transoral approach offers a promising avenue for the surgical management of craniocervical tumors. By leveraging advancements in surgical technology, intraoperative imaging and multidisciplinary collaboration, clinicians can continue to refine and improve surgical techniques, ultimately enhancing outcomes and quality of life for patients with craniocervical pathology requiring clivus-cervical stabilization. Through ongoing research, innovation and clinical experience, the transoral approach will continue to play a vital role in the multidisciplinary management of craniocervical tumors in the years to come.

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Conflict of Interest

None.

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