The first laparoscopic Nissen fundoplications in Cyprus

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ABSTRACT

The operative and short term results of the first five patients in Cyprus to undergo laparoscopic Nissen fundoplication are presented. All patients had symptomatic gastroesophageal reflux disease requiring chronic medication and had esophagitis on preoperative endoscopy. The average operative time was 3.0 hr (range 2.5 to 4.0). There were no perioperative complications. All patients were discharged home by the second postoperative day, and were back to regular activity within two weeks. In a follow up period of 12 months, there has been no recurrence of reflux symptoms. Laparoscopic Nissen fundoplication is safe and effective management of gastroesophageal reflux disease, and allows short hospitalization and recovery time.

Key words: laparoscopic Nissen fundoplication, gastroesophageal reflux disease, antireflux procedure.

INTRODUCTION

Nissen fundoplication is a proven treatment for symptomatic gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD).1-3 Performed by the traditional open technique, Nissen fundoplication requires 1-2 weeks of hospitalization and several months of convalescence.4 Laparoscopic Nissen fundoplication has been performed for 4 years.5,6 There have been several reports5,6,7 which have found open and laparoscopic fundoplication to be equally effective; the latter operation was found to have a shorter hospitalization time. Here we report the technique and short term results for the first five laparoscopic Nissen fundoplications done in Cyprus.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Our technique of laparoscopic Nissen fundoplication has been published previously.4 Briefly, under general anesthesia the patient is placed in the low lithotomy position with the surgeon standing in between the legs and assistants at the sides (Figure 1). Five 10mm
trocars are placed, as shown in Figure 2. The laparo-
scope is inserted through port 1 (see Figure 2). The left
lobe of the liver is retracted medially with an inflat-
able atraumatic laparoscopic retractor (Soft-Wand, Circon-
Cabot, Longhome PA, USA) inserted through port 2.
The stomach is grasped with a laparoscopic Babcock
clamp through port 5, and the gastrohepatic omentum
is held with a grasper through port 3. With this traction
and counter traction, the omentum is incised with either
scissors or hook cautery inserted through port 4 (see
Figure 3), and the gastroesophageal junction (GEJ) is
exposed.

With a 50 French Maloney dilator in the esopha-
gus, the area posterior to the GEJ is bluntly dissected
until the spleen is visualized. With a babcock clamp in
port 3 providing traction, the short gastric vessels are
then clipped and ligated through port 4 (see Figure 4).
A laparoscope with a 30 degree view angle facilitates
this portion of the procedure. If a hiatal hernia is pre-
sent, the stomach may be reduced into the abdomen
with gentle traction applied by Babcock clamps. If the
patient has an enlarged esophageal hiatus, a posterior
cruroplasty may be performed at this point using inter-
upted sutures of 2-0 braided polyester (through port 4),
as shown in Figure 5.

A Babcock clamp is inserted through port 3 and is
passed behind the GEJ to grasp the fundus of the stom-
5. If the patient has a large defect in the esophageal hiatus, a posterior cruroplasty may be performed using interrupted sutures of 2-0 braided polyester. A Babcock clamp inserted through port 3 provides the necessary lift on the esophagus.

6. A Babcock clamp is passed behind the gastroesophageal junction to grasp the fundus of the stomach. The fundus is pulled posterior to the junction to create the wrap.

ach (see Figure 6). The posterior vagus is kept applied to the esophagus, and is included in the fundoplication. The fundus is pulled behind the GEJ to create the wrap. With the Maloney in place, the fundoplication is completed by suturing the fundus on to itself with interrupted sutures of 2-0 braided polyester (through port 4), as shown in Figure 7. The diaphragm is incorporated into the most cephalad stitch to prevent slippage of the wrap. The trocars are removed, and the fascia of ports 1, 4, and 5 is closed with interrupted sutures of 0 braided nylon. The demis is closed with intracuticular 3-0 polyglyactin.

Postoperatively a nasogastric tube is not used. The patient is allowed liquids (no carbonated beverages) the evening of the operation, and soft food is given in the morning. Any discomfort from the incisions is managed with oral analgesics. Antireflux medication is not given. If the patient is feeling well enough, discharge is possible on postoperative day 1; otherwise discharge is planned for postoperative day 2.

7. The fundoplication is completed by suturing the fundus on to itself with interrupted sutures of 2-0 braided polyester (with or without teflon pledgets). A 50 French Maloney dilator is in the esophagus at this point.
RESULTS

Fundoplication was performed on five patients (three men, two women) with an average age of 51 (range 34-64). All patients had severe GERD with a chief symptom of heartburn, and all were taking antireflux medication chronically. All patients underwent esophagogastroduodenoscopy (EGD) preoperatively, and all were found to have erosive esophagitis. Three of the patients had a hiatal hernia, as demonstrated on preoperative barium contrast study. None of the patients had any previous abdominal operation.

The average operative time was 3.0 hr (range 2.5-4.0 hr). There were no intraoperative or postoperative complications. Heartburn was not present postoperatively, and did not recur in the 12 month follow up period. None of the patients had taken antireflux medication postoperatively. All patients were back at their preoperative level of activity within two weeks of the operation. A follow up EGD performed 3-6 months postoperatively revealed resolution of esophagitis in all patients. The patients characterized the result of the operation as good to excellent.

CONCLUSIONS

We have described the technique and outcome of the first five laparoscopic Nissen fundoplications in Cyprus. Laparoscopic fundoplication provides safe and effective treatment of GERD, but without the disadvantages of open operation (that is, long incision, severe postoperative pain, and prolonged hospitalization and recovery time). It has been our experience and the experience of others that patient satisfaction is high with this procedure; we have observed the same result in Cyprus. We feel that laparoscopic Nissen fundoplication should be the operative treatment of choice for GERD, and that open operation should be reserved for difficult cases.

Experienced laparoscopists believe that the degree of difficulty with a laparoscopic fundoplication is higher than it is with the more common laparoscopic procedure, cholecystectomy. We recommend that any surgeon who wishes to perform laparoscopic fundoplication first obtains proper training in the technique. This would involve experience in the animal lab followed by tuteelage under a surgeon experienced in the operation.

Heartburn occurs daily in an estimated 7% of the general (U.S.) population. The symptoms of the majority of these patients can be controlled medically. A minority will not succeed with medical management, and traditionally fundoplication then is indicated. Lately, however, there has been an increase in the incidence of adenocarcinoma of the esophagus. There has been a concern that this is secondary to chronic reflux of gastric and duodenal contents into the esophagus. Acid reduction therapy will not affect the alkaline component of reflux, so this would continue to be a source of chronic injury to the esophageal mucosa, possibly leading to neoplasia. A properly performed laparoscopic fundoplication would eliminate all reflux with minimal discomfort to the patient. With the accumulation of the above data, we now are recommending laparoscopic fundoplication in the patient with GERD who has esophagitis, who otherwise would require lifelong antireflux medication, and who has no contraindication to operation.

REFERENCES