



Title **Quality and Safety of Surgery: Three Queries for VHA Surgical Service**

Agency **VATAP, VA Technology Assessment Program**

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Aim

To search the literature to answer 3 questions: 1) Has a threshold rate of unplanned or emergency surgical procedures been documented? 2) What model programs for surgical quality improvement are found in the literature? 3) Which interventions are effective for preventing surgical errors, eg, retained foreign bodies or wrong-site surgery?

Conclusions and results

Question 1: 6 primary studies and no systematic reviews were found in the literature. None of these studies define a rate of emergency surgical procedures that can be used as a quality indicator. Question 2: 13 articles were found. Two programs emerged as praiseworthy: the Veterans Health Administration's National Surgical Quality Improvement Program and the United Kingdom's National Confidential Enquiry Into Perioperative Deaths. Question 3: 5 systematic reviews were found. To prevent errors, preventative counts and protocols are widely used in operating rooms.

Recommendations

No recommendations can be made for Questions 1 and 3. For Question 2: Berwick's "New Way" approach to quality improvement (JAMA 2006;295(3):324-327) may provide insight on issues such as resources and staffing.

Methods

Literature searches were conducted using specific search terms for each question. The following databases were searched: INAHTA, PubMed, MEDLINE, EMBASE, Dialog Information Services, and the Cochrane Library. Search terms included: surgical quality indicators, quality assurance, trends, quality improvement, National Surgical Quality Improvement Program, Continuous Improvement in Cardiac Surgery Program, Neurosurgery Consultants Board, emergency surgery, surgical errors, sentinel events, error prevention, wrong site, retained foreign bodies, and surgical safety.

Further research/reviews required

For Question 1: unplanned returns to the operating room may be used as a quality indicator. For Question 3: effectiveness testing is needed for the protocols, especially during emergency situations.