Practical issues in treatment of appendicitis
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CHAPTER 1

‘Snapshot’ research: a novel trainee-led study design

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Submitted
CHAPEL 1

ABSTRACT

‘Snapshot’ research is a new multicenter study method that is particularly suited to investigate a common condition or treatment. These (mostly observational) studies are primarily initiated and conducted by trainees. Because of a good research network of these trainees, a large amount of data can be collected in a short period while the workload for each participating hospital remains limited. In this chapter the various aspects of a ‘snapshot’ study are explained and discussed.
THE ‘SNAPSHOT’ STUDY METHOD

The National Surgical Research Collaborative published nationwide (British) outcomes of acute appendectomy in 2013. This study was conducted according to a new method; a short, observational audit that was designed and conducted by surgical trainees. In a 2-month study period 3326 patients were included prospectively in 95 hospitals. This resulted in several publications of the collaborative study group including all participating centres and local investigators.

In analogue to this British study a prospective, observational ‘snapshot’ study was conducted in 62 Dutch hospitals to evaluate and analyse current surgical treatment of appendicitis and its outcome. All academic centres (n=8), 84% of general community teaching hospitals (n=38) and 41% of the general community non-teaching hospitals (n=16) participated in this study. Patients (n=1975, both adults and children) who were primarily operated for suspected acute appendicitis in the months June and July 2014 (preceded by a pilot phase in May in 8 hospitals) were included in the study. In each hospital, 1 local investigator was responsible for collecting and processing data that were entered anonymous into an electronic web-based database. This local investigator was mostly a surgical trainee supervised by a consultant (trainer or gastrointestinal surgeon). The investigators of the participating centres are co-authors of the published research.

The ‘snapshot’ appendicitis study was the first Dutch study that was conducted according to this new design and reflects surgical treatment of appendicitis in the Netherlands. The main part of Dutch hospitals participated to this ‘snapshot’ study and this led to inclusion of 1975 patients in a short study period and a 100% complete 30-day follow-up. Appendicitis is very suitable for such study design for its frequent appearance and short follow-up needed to evaluate outcome of treatment. Active participation of the local investigator in the participating centres was warranted because of the very short study period, the observational design without need for informed consent and complete paper-free digital case record forms. A ‘snapshot’ study design can realise a quick and optimal inclusion of many patients although the workload per hospital is limited (in the appendicitis study an average of only 32 inclusions per hospital). However, general community non-teaching hospitals participated less in this study because of absence of trainees in these clinics.

CONCLUSION

‘Snapshot’ research is a new effective method to collect a huge amount of data about a certain pathology or treatment in a short time frame. This short multicentre audit is very suitable to evaluate outcomes and also to recommend possible modifications in treatment. The study method facilitates a ‘snapshot’ view of current practice.
REFERENCES