

LEARNING CURVE OF ENDOSCOPIC RETROGRADE CHOLANGIO PANCREATOGRAPHY (ERCP) IN A DEVELOPING COUNTRY: A REVIEW OF THE FIRST 300 PROCEDURES

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Introduction: ERCP is a technically demanding procedure which can cause substantial complications. The objective of this study was to analyze the problems encountered, lessons learnt, success rate and complications during the first 300 procedures.

Material and Methods: All procedures were performed by the first author. The details of the procedure were entered in a pre-formatted data sheet. The patients were divided into three groups of 100 each, so that group 1 represented the first 100 patients and so on. The groups were analyzed with regard to the rate of cannulation, problems encountered and complications.

Results: The mean age of the patients was 49.0 years (range 23 - 84). The male: female ratio was 141:159. The cannulation rates for the three groups were 57%, 66% and 84%.

Therapeutic procedures performed included biliary sphincterotomy, stone extraction, Biliary stenting, pancreatic sphincterotomy and lithotripsy. Selective cannulation of the common bile duct was the main problem in all three groups. Therapeutic procedures were not a problem once cannulation had been achieved. Complications included acute pancreatitis (4/300), cholangitis (9/300) and basket impaction (1/300) The complication rate did not differ significantly in the three groups.

Conclusions: ERCP is a safe procedure during the learning curve. Careful assessment of the axis of the common bile duct and the pancreatic duct prior to cannulation and early introduction of a wire guide were the main lessons learnt.