ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

Anaesthesiology

KEY WORDS: Awake Craniotomy, Anesthesia Techniques, Patient Comfort, Neurological Outcomes, Surgical Conditions.

COMPARATIVE EFFECTIVENESS OF ANESTHETIC TECHNIQUES FOR AWAKE CRANIOTOMY: AN OBSERVATIONAL STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Background: Awake craniotomy is increasingly used for supratentorial tumor resection, but optimal anesthesia techniques remain debated. **Objectives:** To compare the efficacy and safety of different anesthesia techniques for awake craniotomy. **Methods:** Prospective study of 80 patients undergoing awake craniotomy. Anesthesia techniques: local anesthesia (LA) + sedation, regional anesthesia (RA) + sedation, general anesthesia (GA) with laryngeal mask airway (LMA), monitored anesthesia care (MAC) with scalp block, and dexmedetomidine-based sedation. **Results:** Significant differences were found in patient comfort ($p < 0.01$), neurological outcomes ($p = 0.02$), and surgical conditions ($p < 0.05$) among groups. LA + sedation and MAC with scalp block showed superior results. **Conclusion:** This study demonstrates varying effectiveness and safety profiles among anesthesia techniques for awake craniotomy. Local anesthesia + sedation and monitored anesthesia care with scalp block appear optimal.

INTRODUCTION

Awake craniotomy, a surgical technique that allows patients to remain conscious during brain tumor resection, has gained popularity in recent years due to its potential benefits in minimizing brain damage and enhancing postoperative recovery. This approach requires precise anesthesia management to ensure patient comfort, optimize surgical conditions, and prevent neurological complications.
Rationale for Awake Craniotomy

Awake craniotomy offers several advantages over traditional general anesthesia, including:

1. Reduced risk of neurological damage: Awake craniotomy allows for real-time monitoring of neurological function, enabling prompt intervention in case of potential damage.
2. Improved surgical accuracy: Patient feedback during surgery enhances tumor localization and resection.
3. Faster recovery: Reduced anesthesia-related complications and minimized brain swelling facilitate quicker postoperative recovery.

Anesthesia Challenges

However, awake craniotomy poses unique anesthesia challenges:

1. Balancing sedation and analgesia: Minimizing patient discomfort while maintaining consciousness.
2. Preventing respiratory complications: Ensuring adequate ventilation and oxygenation.
3. Managing anxiety and stress: Optimizing patient comfort and cooperation.

Anesthesia Techniques

Various anesthesia techniques have been employed for awake craniotomy, including:

1. Local anesthesia (LA) + sedation
2. Regional anesthesia (RA) + sedation
3. General anesthesia (GA) with laryngeal mask airway (LMA)
4. Monitored anesthesia care (MAC) with scalp block
5. Dexmedetomidine-based sedation

Technique 1: Local Anesthesia (LA) + Sedation

Local anesthetic (e.g., lidocaine, bupivacaine) is administered to numb the scalp, and sedation (e.g., midazolam, propofol) is provided for relaxation.

Advantages:

1. Minimizes systemic anesthesia effects
2. Preserves neurological function
3. Allows for patient feedback

Disadvantages:

1. Limited analgesic effect
2. Risk of local anesthetic toxicity

Technique 2: Regional Anesthesia (RA) + Sedation

Regional anesthetic (e.g., scalp block, cervical plexus block) is administered to numb the scalp and neck, and sedation is provided for relaxation.

Advantages:

1. Provides more extensive analgesia
2. Reduces risk of local anesthetic toxicity
3. Enhances patient comfort

Disadvantages:

1. May affect neurological function
2. Requires specialized training

Technique 3: General Anesthesia (GA) with Laryngeal Mask Airway (LMA)

General anesthesia is administered, and a laryngeal mask airway is inserted to maintain airway patency.

Advantages:

1. Provides complete anesthesia
2. Controls airway
3. Easy to manage

Disadvantages:

1. Increases risk of respiratory complications
2. May affect neurological function
3. Requires muscle relaxation

Technique 4: Monitored Anesthesia Care (MAC) with Scalp Block

Sedation and analgesia are provided, and a scalp block is administered to numb the scalp.

Advantages:

1. Balances sedation and analgesia
2. Preserves neurological function
3. Enhances patient comfort

Disadvantages:

1. Requires specialized training
2. May not provide complete anesthesia

Technique 5: Dexmedetomidine-Based Sedation

Dexmedetomidine, an alpha-2 adrenergic agonist, is administered for sedation and analgesia.

Advantages:

1. Provides sedation without respiratory depression
2. Preserves neurological function
3. Enhances patient comfort

Disadvantages:

1. May cause hypotension
2. Requires careful titration

Objective

The primary objective of this study is to compare the efficacy and safety of different anesthesia techniques for awake craniotomy.

Methods :

Participants

The study was approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB, GMC SRINAGAR & Associated Hospitals), and written informed consent was obtained from the patients . 80 patients undergoing awake craniotomy for supratentorial tumor resection between January 2020 and December 2023 were included . The study was conducted at Government Medical College Srinagar and its associated Hospitals

Inclusion Criteria

1. Adults (≥18 years)
2. ASA I-III
3. Supratentorial tumor resection
4. Awake craniotomy

Exclusion Criteria

1. Previous neurological deficits
2. Severe anxiety/depression
3. Inability to provide informed consent
4. Emergency surgery

Anesthesia Techniques

Patients received one of five anesthesia techniques:

1. Local anesthesia (LA) + sedation
2. Regional anesthesia (RA) + sedation
3. General anesthesia (GA) with laryngeal mask airway (LMA)
4. Monitored anesthesia care (MAC) with scalp block
5. Dexmedetomidine-based sedation

Data Collection

Electronic medical records and anesthesia charts were reviewed for:

1. Demographic data
2. Anesthesia technique
3. Intraoperative vital signs
4. Patient comfort (Visual Analog Scale)
5. Neurological outcomes (postoperative cognitive function, motor/sensory deficits)
6. Surgical conditions (operative time, blood loss, surgeon satisfaction)

Outcome Measures

Primary outcomes:

1. Patient comfort
2. Neurological outcomes

Secondary outcomes:

1. Surgical conditions
2. Anesthesia-related complications
3. Patient's comfort
4. Recovery time

Statistical Analysis

Descriptive statistics, ANOVA, chi-squared test, and multivariate regression analysis were used to compare outcomes among groups.

Sample Size Calculation

Based on a previous study, a sample size of 80 patients was estimated to provide 80% power to detect a significant difference in patient comfort among anesthesia techniques.

RESULTS

Demographics

Technique	N	Age (mean ± SD	Gender (M/F)
LA + Sedation	16	45.6 ± 12.1	9/7
RA + Sedation	16	42.9 ± 10.5	10/6
GA with LMA	16	48.1 ± 11.9	8/8
MAC with Scalp Block	16	43.8 ± 9.8	11/5
Dexmedetomidine-Based Sedation	16	46.3 ± 10.9	9/7

Primary Outcomes

Technique	Patient Comfort (VAS)	Neurological Outcomes
LA + Sedation	3.5 ± 1.8	12/16 (75%)
RA + Sedation	2.9 ± 1.4	14/16 (87.5%)
GA with LMA	4.2 ± 2.1	10/16 (62.5%)
Dexmedetomidine-Based Sedation	2.8 ± 1.5	14/16 (87.5%)
MAC with Scalp Block	2.5 ± 1.2	15/16 (93.8%)

Secondary Outcomes

Technique	Surgical Conditions	Anesthesia-Related Complications
LA + Sedation	12/16 (75%)	2/16 (12.5%)
RA + Sedation	14/16 (87.5%)	1/16 (6.3%)
GA with LMA	10/16 (62.5%)	4/16 (25%)
Dexmedetomidine-Based Sedation	14/16 (87.5%)	14/16 (87.5%)
MAC with Scalp Block	15/16 (93.8%)	0/16 (0%)

Technique	Patient Comfort	Neurological Outcomes	Surgical Conditions
LA + Sedation	Poor (VAS 5.1 ± 2.5)	Poor (60)	Poor (60%)
RA + Sedation	Good (VAS 3.5 ± 1.8)	Good (80%)	Excellent (90%)
GA with LMA	Fair (VAS 4.2 ± 2.1)	Fair (70%)	Fair (70%)
Dexmedetomidine-Based Sedation	Excellent (VAS 2.8 ± 1.5)	Superior (87.5%)	Good (80%)
MAC with Scalp Block	Excellent (VAS 2.5 ± 1.2)	Superior (93.8%)	Good (85%)

Technique	Recovery Time (in minutes)
LA + Sedation	90 ± 45
RA + Sedation	50 ± 20
GA with LMA	60 ± 30
Dexmedetomidine-Based Sedation	40 ± 15
MAC with Scalp Block	30 ± 10

Statistical Analysis

- ANOVA: Patient comfort ($p < 0.01$), neurological outcomes ($p = 0.02$)
- Chi-squared test: Surgical conditions ($p < 0.05$), anesthesia-related complications ($p = 0.01$)

DISCUSSION

The results of this study demonstrate that MAC with scalp block and dexmedetomidine-based sedation are superior to other anesthesia techniques for awake craniotomy in terms of patient comfort and neurological outcomes.

Patient Comfort

MAC with scalp block provided the best patient comfort (VAS 2.5 ± 1.2), likely due to the synergistic effect of sedation and local anesthesia (1). Dexmedetomidine-based sedation also demonstrated excellent patient comfort (VAS 2.8 ± 1.5), consistent with its known sedative and analgesic properties (2).

Neurological Outcomes

MAC with scalp block and dexmedetomidine-based sedation showed superior neurological outcomes (93.8% and 87.5%, respectively), possibly due to minimized anesthesia-related complications and preserved neurological function (3, 4).

Surgical Conditions

Regional anesthesia + sedation provided better surgical conditions (87.5%), likely due to improved analgesia and reduced bleeding (5).

Our findings are consistent with previous studies demonstrating the efficacy of MAC with scalp block and dexmedetomidine-based sedation for awake craniotomy. (6,7)

Patient Comfort (5,6,7)
- Ard et al. (2019): MAC with scalp block provided excellent patient comfort (VAS 2.2 ± 1.1)
- Sivasankar et al. (2020): Dexmedetomidine-based sedation resulted in excellent patient comfort (VAS 2.6 ± 1.3)
- Bilotta et al. (2018): Regional anesthesia with sedation provided good patient comfort (VAS 3.8 ± 1.9)

Neurological Outcomes
- Hans et al. (2018): MAC with scalp block resulted in superior neurological outcomes (92%) [1]
- Côté et al. (2016): Dexmedetomidine-based sedation demonstrated superior neurological outcomes (88%) [2]
- Manninen et al. (2017): Regional anesthesia with sedation resulted in good neurological outcomes (82%) [3]

Surgical Conditions
- Ard et al. (2019): MAC with scalp block provided excellent surgical conditions (90%) [1]
- Sivasankar et al. (2020): Dexmedetomidine-based sedation resulted in excellent surgical conditions (85%) [2]
- Bilotta et al. (2018): Regional anesthesia with sedation provided good surgical conditions (80%) [3]

Complications
- Hans et al. (2018): MAC with scalp block resulted in low anesthesia-related complications (4%) [1]
- Côté et al. (2016): Dexmedetomidine-based sedation demonstrated low anesthesia-related complications (5%) [2]
- Manninen et al. (2017): Regional anesthesia with sedation resulted in moderate anesthesia-related complications (12%) [3]

Limitations

This study's limitations include its relatively small sample size (n=80) and single-center design.

CONCLUSION

This investigative study underscores the superiority of monitored anesthesia care (MAC) with scalp block and dexmedetomidine-based sedation in optimizing patient comfort and neurological outcomes during awake craniotomy. These findings endorse the adoption of these techniques as primary anesthesia strategies.

Principal Outcomes
1. MAC with scalp block yielded exceptional patient comfort and neurological results.
2. Dexmedetomidine-based sedation demonstrated remarkable patient comfort and neurological benefits.
3. Regional anesthesia combined with sedation facilitated superior surgical conditions.

Clinical Implications
1. Enhanced patient experience and neurological preservation.
2. Improved surgical efficacy.
3. Potential reduction in anesthesia-related adverse events.

Avenues for Future Research
1. Large-scale, multicenter trials to validate these findings.
2. Exploration of alternative anesthesia modalities.
3. Development of tailored anesthesia protocols.

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