Journal Scan

Jan Kulig, Tadeusz Popiela, Piotr Kolodziejczyk, Marek Sierzega, Antoni Szezepanik: Standard D2 versus extended D2 (D2+) lymphadenectomy for gastric cancer: An interim safety analysis of a multicentre, randomised, clinical trial. Am J Surg 2007; 193: 10-5.

Gastric carcinoma, considered, as being one of the 'Captains of the men of death' is common in countries such as Japan, Costa Rica, Peru, Brazil, China, Korea, Chile, Taiwan and India. In contrast to the increasing incidence of proximal tumours in the West, non-proximal tumours continue to predominate in Asia. The cause of this shift remains elusive and may be multifactorial. The standard of care in cancer of the stomach is presently accepted as a gastrectomy and lymph node clearance which decisively affects prognosis. Operative clearance of the lymph nodes is of utmost importance and requires a thorough surgical training if it is to be done effectively and safely. Removal of the perigastric lymph nodes only is called D1 resection. D2 – lymphadenectomy adds removal of the lymphatic chains along the celiac axis, common hepatic and splenic artery and at the hilus of the spleen. This procedure has been recommended to achieve accurate staging and regional disease control.

This article by the Polish Gastric Cancer Study Group is a randomised multicentre trial carried out in several teaching, high volume surgical gastroenterology departments to evaluate the effects of the extent of lymph node dissection on the results of surgical treatment of gastric cancer. The data base of the study consists of 275 patients randomised into a study group of 131 and a control group of 141. Patients in the study group underwent an extended D2 gastrectomy with lymphadenectomy of the para aortic nodes, nodes from the upper margin of the celiac trunk to the lower margin

of the left renal vein and from the lower margin of the left renal vein to the upper margin of the inferior mesenteric artery. They were compared with a control group undergoing a standard D2 gastrectomy. All patients had confirmed adenocarcinoma of the stomach with a pre operative depth of infiltration of T1-T3 according to the AJCC classification and were screened for eligibility to participate in the study. Patients with disseminated tumours, cancer of the gastric stump, synchronous or metachronous malignancy, any serious cardiac respiratory disease (ASA Grade 4) renal or hepatic failure and those with macroscopic infiltration of surrounding organs and lymph nodes were excluded. The authors analysed the results of the study after surgery and the outcome was measured in terms of post operative complications, requirement of blood transfusions, length of hospital stay and post operative mortality. They concluded, contrary to the common belief, that surgical outcome was not different between the two surgeries although the number of lymph nodes was more in the study group. Even though addition of splenectomy and distal pancreatectomy increased the postoperative complications, it was not found to be statistically significant. The study is powered by randomisation and a strong protocol with definitive outcome measures. However, there are some grey areas that the authors would have done well to explain in greater detail like the indication of splenectomy or distal pancreatectomy in patients with disease limited to the stomach and how increased lymph node number in the specimen had no effect on the staging.

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Book Review

The Toyota Way by Jeffrey K Liker. Publishers, Tata Mcgraw Hill, Paperback and Hardbound, Pages-318, Price- Rs 350/- ISBN Number-0-07-058747-7.

This book on a contemporary subject, i.e the Japanese style of management has garnered a lot of interest over the years. Dr Liker explains the unique style of management as practiced by the Toyota group of companies, titled the "Toyota Way". This book explains the management systems, thinking and philosophy that forms the foundation of Toyota's success, providing the reader with valuable insights that can be applied to any business.

The Toyota Way can be summarized through the two pillars that support it: "Continuous Improvement" and "Respect for People". Continuous Improvement, often called "Kaizen", defines Toyota's basic approach towards doing business – challenge everything. More important than the actual improvements that individuals contribute, the true value of continuous improvement is in creating an atmosphere of continuous learning and an environment that not only accepts, but actually embraces change. Such an environment can only be created where there is respect for people – hence the second pillar of the Toyota Way.

The book provides insights into management principles which include a long term philosophy, creating continuous process flow to bring problems to surface, avoiding over production, level out the workload (Heijunka) – work like the tortoise, not the hare. The Toyota way lays great emphasis on building a culture of stopping to fix problems to get the quality right the first time. It also emphasizes adding value to the organisation by cultivating leadership qualities amongst employees who understand the work, live the philosophy and also teach it to others. Lastly the "Toyota Way" lays stress on "Continuously Solving Root Problems Drives" wherein the importance of going and seeing for yourself to understand the situation, making decisions slowly by consensus, thoroughly considering all options but implementing decisions rapidly all leading to becoming a Learning Organisation through relentless reflection (Hansei) and Continuous Improvement (Kaizen).

The book is a must for people from all walks of life who can utilize the concepts of building quality into workplace systems and turning every employee into a quality control inspector.

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