



Postoperative recovery in children after tonsil surgery
with a focus on pain and pain management from the child's,
caregivers', and professionals' perspectives

av

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Abstract

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Tonsil surgery is one of the most common surgical procedures in children. Although there are several health benefits associated with this surgery, the recovery can be challenging. The overall aim of this thesis was to explore varied perspectives of the recovery process following pediatric tonsil surgery, with a focus on postoperative pain and pain management at home. Study I used data from the National Tonsil Surgery Register in Sweden (n=32,225) to investigate factors affecting pain after pediatric tonsil surgery. Age, surgical method, and indication for surgery influenced the outcome of the patient-reported pain-related outcome measures. In Study II, children (n=299) and their caregiver(s) filled in a diary containing age-appropriate instruments, up to 12 days postoperatively. Data were then analyzed to explore the severity and duration of postoperative pain, the management of analgesics, and postoperative recovery. Children and caregivers reported significant pain for several days, along with a range of physical symptoms and impact on daily activities and emotional state. There was a lack of regular administration of analgesics in the home, particularly during late evening and night. In Study III, interviews with children (n=20) and their caregivers were performed to explore experiences and management of postoperative recovery at home. The results showed that the families struggled to establish resilience during the challenging recovery. The families used both pharmacological and complementary strategies to manage this period. Some families reported insufficient analgesia in preventing breakthrough pain, a lack of preparedness, inadequate information, and insufficient support from the healthcare. In Study IV, nurses and physicians (n=139) from Swedish ear, nose, and throat departments (n=48) responded to a questionnaire covering their opinions of and adherence to the Swedish guidelines for the treatment of pain in pediatric tonsil surgery. In accordance with the guidelines, the departments provided instructions for a multimodal analgesic regimen to manage pain in the home after tonsil surgery. Still, differences were noted between the departments regarding doses and routines around rescue analgesics. Overall, the experience of pain was significant, and often complex to manage. Besides pain, the postoperative period included several troublesome experiences for which neither the children nor the caregivers were informed or prepared. These findings offer knowledge to multidisciplinary teams which can help them improve the support they give to families and increase the child's participation during the recovery process after tonsil surgery.

Keywords: Tonsil surgery, Child, Caregiver, Postoperative pain, Pain management, Postoperative recovery.

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