The Role of Dexmedetomidine in Awake Tracheotomies: increasing patient comfort without airway compromise

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ABSTRACT

Awake tracheotomies are an important tool for management of the difficult airway. Awake tracheotomies have classically been performed with a combination of local and IV anesthesia. Dexmedetomidine is a novel sedative that provides moderate sedation and analgesia without depleting respiratory drive. We performed a retrospective chart review of awake tracheotomies at our institution to determine if the use of dexmedetomidine improved patient comfort and decreased complications.

RESULTS

We performed a retrospective chart review of awake tracheotomies at our institution between 2008-2011. We reviewed operative reports, anesthesia records and postoperative follow-up notes. Patients were divided into groups based on indication for tracheotomy and if dexmedetomidine was used during the procedure. We reviewed complications and performed a cost analysis.

Conclusions: Anesthesia providers at our institution have safely used dexmedetomidine during awake tracheotomies. Dexmedetomidine does not significantly increase the complication rate, although patient comfort and safety are significantly enhanced.

REFERENCES

4. Levin R, Trivikram L. Cost/Benefit Analysis of Open Tracheotomy, in the OR and at the Bedside, With Percutaneous Tracheotomy. The Laryngoscope; Lippincott Williams & Wilkins Inc, July 2001