



Correspondence and Communications

Head bandage after otoplasty: How long should it be worn?

Dear Sir,

Otoplasty is a surgical procedure often performed to correct prominent ears, with the goal of normalizing their shape and position. Various surgical techniques can be utilized to create the antihelical fold if it is missing and/or to reduce the conchal bowl if it is prominent.^{1,2}

Although postoperative dressings are clearly important for successful outcomes following otoplasty,³⁻⁵ consensus is lacking with respect to the optimal bandaging period. Opinions on this subject vary greatly. Some experts advocate retaining the bandage for 7–10 days, whereas others believe it should be removed within 2 days.¹⁻⁵

The authors retrospectively analyzed the results of otoplasty procedures performed by the senior author (R.R.) in the last 10 years.

Data attained from medical records for the period January 2008 to January 2018 were gathered and evaluated retrospectively. The study population comprised 62 consecutively treated patients who received otoplasty.

In 2013, in order to reduce patient's concern regarding the "social discomfort" of head banding the postoperative care was changed. From 2008 to 2012, the surgeon's practice was to keep the bandage in place for 7 days (group A). From 2013 onward, the bandage remained for only 48 h (group B).

Group A

From January 2008 to December 2012, 24 patients (47 ears) underwent otoplasty (16 men, 8 women). One patient had the surgery on only 1 ear, which was performed to improve symmetry. The age range was 18–39 years (mean 25.7 years). In all cases except 1, patients were sedated and received local anesthesia. The other patient had local anesthesia only.

Immediately after the surgery, a cotton head bandage was placed and was retained for 7 days.

The original head bandage was worn for the full 7 days by 23 of the 24 patients. In the other patient, the original bandage became displaced 3 days after surgery; it was replaced and then worn for 7 additional days. No bleeding or other complications, minor or major, were recorded during

follow-up, which ranged from 6 months to 2 years (mean, 10 months).

Group B

From January 2013 to January 2018, 38 patients (76 ears) underwent otoplasty (21 males, 17 females). Their age range was 9–52 years (mean, 23.9 years). Thirty-seven patients received local anesthesia and sedation, and 1 patient underwent general anesthesia. The latter patient was 9 years old and the only minor among the study population. Upon completion of the surgery, a 2-0 percutaneous suture (Vicryl; Ethicon) was placed to fix gauze containing tritium vulgare (Fitostimoline® gauze; Farmaceutici Damor S.p.A., Naples, Italy) to the area or areas undermined during surgery (i.e., concha and/or antihelix) (Figure 1A and B). A cotton wool pad that provided slight compression was placed over the percutaneous stitches, then the same head bandage of group B was applied over them. The gauze, pad and head bandage were kept in place for 48 h.

The only complication that occurred among the 38 patients in this group was the requirement for a new head bandage in 1 case. This was needed because, at the planned time of bandage removal (48 h postoperatively), slow bleeding was observed on left side. The replacement bandage was worn for another 48 h. This complication occurred in the youngest patient, the 9-year-old boy, who was the only patient who received general anesthesia. However, it did not appear that the bleeding was related to the general anesthesia. The follow-up period for this group ranged from 6 months to 2 years (mean, 12 months).

Discussion

The need to bandage ears after otoplasty, and the length of the bandage period, are debatable topics that have not been critically evaluated or reviewed. Although the value of retaining the bandage for more than 24 h postoperatively has been questioned, the practice remains routine for many surgeons.^{1,2-5}

Only Bartley, in 1998, published a paper supporting a shorter duration of ear bandaging after otoplasty. He stated that 24 h of head bandaging after ear surgery should be sufficient, and assessed this practice among 52 consecutively treated patients.²

In the present study, the bandaging period was reduced from 7 days to 48 h. Only 1 minor complication occurred



Figure 1 Patient from group B. This 42-year-old white man underwent otoplasty for prominent ears. (A) Immediately after surgery, and before placement of the head bandage, 2 pieces of gauze containing triticum vulgare were fixed with a 2-0 percutaneous suture above the area of surgical undermining (conchal bowl and antihelical fold). The gauze served as a compression device. (B) Immediately following complete removal of the head bandage and compressive gauze 48 h after surgery.

in each group, both involving the need for additional bandaging time. Neither patient experienced any sequelae secondary to the complication.

Consensus is lacking as to the appropriate duration of bandaging following otoplasty. Although there were differences in the techniques for placing bandages the results of the present case study support the hypothesis of no need of ear bandaging after otoplasty more than 48 h.

However, large randomized blinded studies are warranted before determinations can be made regarding the optimal bandaging period or the type of bandage that will best promote healing while being cosmetically acceptable to patients.

Conflict of interest

None.

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