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CHRONIC INGUINAL PAIN FOLLOWING MESH REPAIR OF INGUINAL HERNIA: A QUESTIONNAIRE BASED STUDY

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Background/Aim: The incidence of chronic pain (after 3-6 months following inguinal hernia repair) varies from 0.7-36.7%. The aim was to study the incidence of chronic pain, its effect on quality of life (QOL) and its association with other painful conditions in our patients.

Methods: Two hundred and eight (208) consecutive patients who underwent mesh repair in our unit over a 28 month period were sent a questionnaire regarding the presence of chronic pain or discomfort and their effect on QOL. Of these patients 100(48%) responded. Pain was categorized as severe pain, mild - moderate pain and discomfort. Other painful conditions from which patients were suffering were also studied.

Results: The follow up period ranged from 3 - 32 months. Ninety-four patients (94%) were males. Mean age was 46.2(range-16-78) years. Eighty-four (84%) were open repairs (74 unilateral, 3 recurrent unilateral and 7 bilateral repairs) and 16 (16%) were laparoscopic repairs (3 recurrent and 13 bilateral). Of the patients who had open repairs 2 had severe pain 12 had mild - moderate pain and 13 had discomfort with a total of 27 (32%). QOL was affected in 14 (51.8%) patients who had pain following open repair. Of the 16 laparoscopic repairs only 2 (12.5%) had discomfort and QOL was not affected. All 3 patients who had open repairs for recurrent hernia had pain. Out of 29 patients who had pain 24 (82.7%) were suffering from another unrelated painful condition.

Conclusions: 1. Approximately, 30% of patients who undergo mesh repair of an inguinal hernia have chronic pain or discomfort. 2. QOL was affected in half the number of patients who had pain or discomfort. 3. The majority of these patients were suffering from another unrelated painful condition. 4. The incidence of pain appears to be higher following open repair for a recurrent hernia when compared to a laparoscopic repair.