Splenectomy via the posterolateral approach in ovarian cancer

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Splenectomy is the second most common upper abdominal procedure in ovarian cancer,1 due to metastatic tumors in the splenic capsule, pedicle, or parenchyma. Pancreatic damage, resulting in a pancreatic fistula, is not uncommon after splenectomy, especially in patients who underwent concomitantly distal pancreatectomy.2 This is because the tail of the pancreas often abuts the splenic hilum and metastatic tumors in the splenic hilum could obscure the tail of the pancreas. In this video, we introduce the technique of splenectomy via the posterolateral approach, which may facilitate detaching the pancreatic tail from the splenic hilum and aid in diminishing pancreatic damage.

The key points of the procedure are summarized as follows: (1) Retracting the spleen cephalad, transection of the splenocolic ligament. (2) Retracting the spleen laterally, dissection of the gastrospenic ligament and the short gastric vessels. (3) Retracting the spleen caudad, dissection of the splenophrenic ligament. (4) Retracting the spleen medially, dissection of the splenorenal ligament. (5) Rotate the spleen medially and ventrally to access the posterior aspect of the spleen. Identify the tail of the pancreas and then

Figure 1  Splenectomy via different approaches. (A, B) Splenectomy via the anterior approach. Transect the splenic vessels and then separate the spleen from the pancreatic tail via the anterior approach, which may increase the risk of pancreatic damage and distal pancreatectomy when the splenic hilum is obscured by the tumor. (C, D) Splenectomy via the posterolateral approach. Rotate the spleen medially and ventrally to fully expose the pancreatic tail, mobilize the pancreatic tail away from the hilum, then transect the splenic vessels via the posterolateral approach, which could diminish the pancreatic damage and have more chance of preservation of the distal pancreas.
mobilize it away from the splenic hilum with caution. The yellowish pancreatic tissue is bounded by a thin capsule, distinguished from the surrounding visceral fat. (6) Ligate and transect successively the splenic artery and vein close to the spleen. (7) Divide the remaining soft-tissue attachments and remove the spleen.

With this method, compared with splenectomy by the anterior approach, the splenic vessels and the tail of the pancreas were fully exposed from the posterolateral side. This procedure allows for separating adequately the pancreatic tail from the splenic hilum, which could keep the pancreas intact and have more chance of preserving the distal pancreas during the splenectomy.

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