Use of indocyanine green for ureteric illumination and visualization

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Accepted 13 December 2023

The ureters arise from the renal pelvis and track towards the bladder in close proximity to important vascular structures (aorta and inferior vena cava; common, external and internal iliac vessels), and pelvic organs, which make it vulnerable to intra-operative injury. The risk of ureteric injury at laparoscopic hysterectomy is approximately 0.5%, but can vary depending on risk factors.1

The distal (pelvic) part of the ureter is most exposed to iatrogenic injury. Risk of injury increases with complexity of the planned surgical procedure, distorted anatomy, and surgical technique/skill (eg, learning curve during robotic surgery). Injuries occur through the surgeon being unaware of the proximity of the ureter(s), which may lead to intra-operative misjudgment.

Intra-operative fluorescent-guided medical imaging of ureters is off-label and novel. Intravenous injection of near-infrared fluorescent agents is used to illuminate and identify the ureter at laparoscopic hysterectomy. This method allows for real-time visualization of ureters, reducing the risk of injury during surgery.1

Video 1 Use of ICG for intra-operative ureteric illumination at laparoscopic hysterectomy

Figure 1 Image from video, demonstrating indocyanine green illumination of right ureter on right pelvic sidewall.
Video article

under pre-clinical development. A practical solution is the intra-operative injection of indocyanine green (ICG) into the ureter through a cystoscopy (retrograde) approach.

ICG is prepared for injection in a 10 mL syringe. A normal saline cystoscopy is performed with a secondary laparoscopic stack allowing simultaneous laparoscopic and cystoscopic views. Bladder intactness is checked, both ureteric orifices are located, ureteric catheters (7 French) are inserted over a guidewire 5 to 10 cm into one or both ureters, and ICG is injected (5 mL each side). The ureteric catheter(s) is removed and an indwelling catheter is placed. At laparoscopy, the injected ureter is visualized immediately (see Online Supplemental File 1).

Our video article demonstrates the use of ICG in a patient who underwent a laparoscopic hysterectomy, 5 years following a radical trachelectomy for stage IB1 cervical adenosquamous carcinoma previously. The retroperitoneum was highly distorted and white light laparoscopic surgical assessment failed to identify the ureters.

This technique has been described in laparoscopic, colorectal surgery, and gynecological surgery. This article demonstrates the use of this technique in the setting of distorted anatomy and significant adhesions.

Contributors A0 contributed by research project conception, patient recruitment, drafting and editing the manuscript. HD drafted and edited the manuscript, recorded and edited the surgical video. SS and JL contributed by research project conception and editing the manuscript. A0 is responsible for the overall content as guarantor.

Funding The authors have not declared a specific grant for this research from any funding agency in the public, commercial or not-for-profit sectors.

Competing interests Professor A Obermair declares the following conflicts: consulting fees and travel support from AstraZeneca Australia, GSK and Stryker; ownership of shares in Surgical Performance Pty Ltd.

Patient consent for publication Consent obtained directly from patient(s)

Ethics approval This study involves human participants. In keeping with other major ethics committees, the institutions of the authors do not require formal ethics approval for case reports, where explicit patient consent is provided, as in this case. The study participant gave written informed consent to produce a video for teaching, medical education, research and publication on- and offline.

Provenance and peer review Not commissioned; externally peer reviewed.

Data availability statement There are no data in this work.

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