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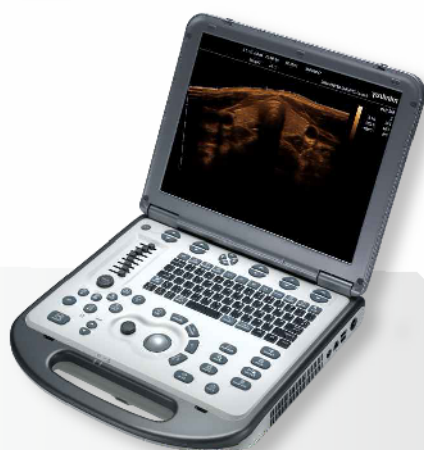
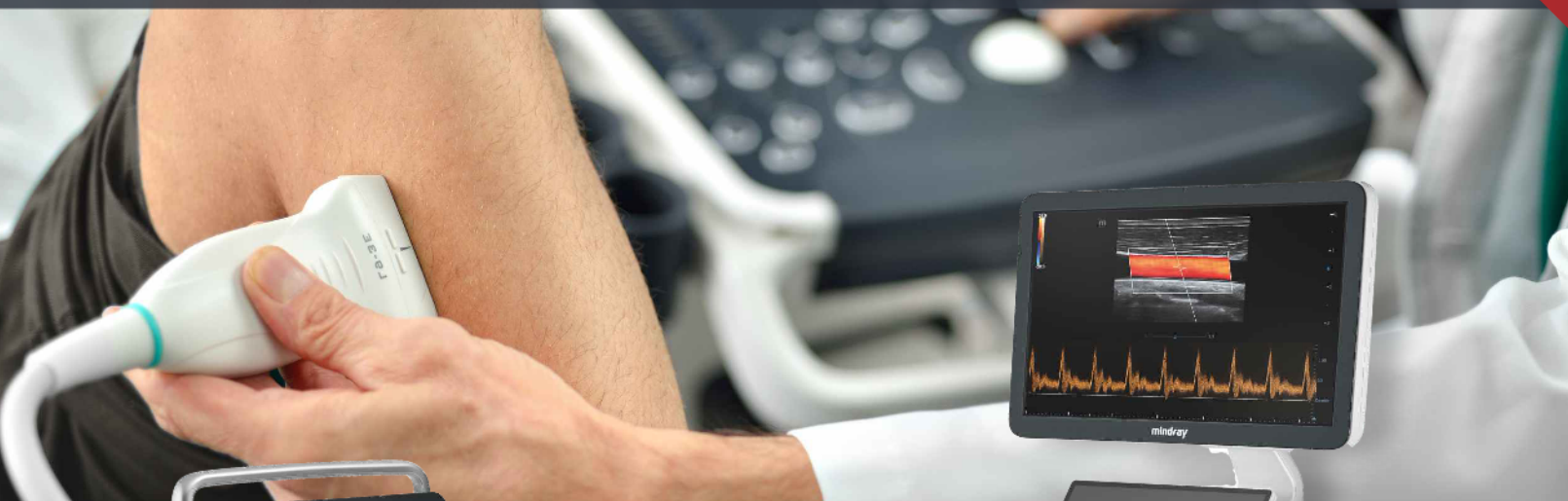
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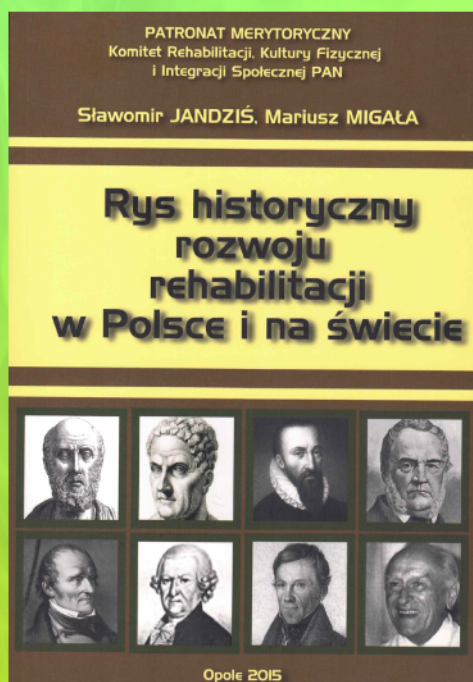
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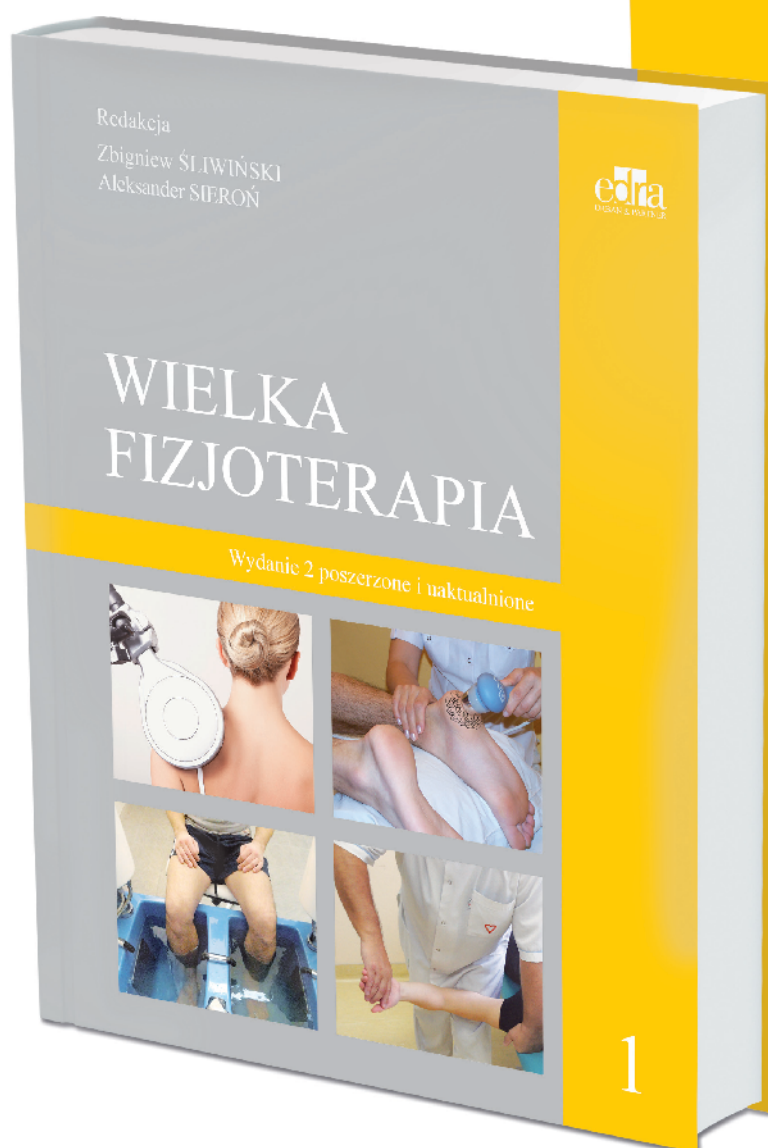
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Impact of different types of anaesthesia for cesarean delivery on subacute low back pain intensity and disability: A retrospective cohort study

Wpływ różnych rodzajów znieczulenia stosowanych przy cesarskim cięciu na nasilenie podostrego bólu krzyża i niepełnosprawność: retrospektywne badanie kohortowe

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Abstract

Background. Low back pain (LBP) is common after cesarean delivery. So, this study was conducted to assess and compare the intensity of subacute LBP and disability among women who underwent cesarean delivery with different anaesthetic types.

Methodology. This retrospective cohort study was conducted to 38 women "26 of them underwent cesarean delivery, assessed after 6 to 12 weeks from delivery, they were classified into: [epidural anaesthetic group (Group A) n = 6, spinal anaesthetic group (Group B) n = 13, general anaesthetic group (Group C) n = 7], they were either primiparous or multiparous who did not receive anaesthesia for at least one year prior to the last delivery, the other 12 women were the control group (Group D) who didn't experience pregnancy or anaesthesia".

Results. The mean values of visual analogue scale (VAS) in Group A, Group B, Group C, and Group D were 5.00 ± 1.67 , 4.62 ± 1.12 , 5.14 ± 1.21 , and 2.17 ± 0.71 , respectively. The ANOVA test revealed a significant difference in VAS ($P = 0.0001$; $P < 0.05$) among the four groups. while the post-hoc test revealed non-significant differences ($P = 1.000$; $P > 0.05$) between the three anaesthetic groups. Also, the mean values of Oswestry Disability Index (ODI) in the same four groups were 26.00 ± 16.68 , 27.00 ± 11.72 , 30.00 ± 6.87 , and 25.00 ± 9.33 , respectively. The ANOVA test revealed non-significant difference in ODI ($P = 0.838$; $P < 0.05$) among the four groups.

Conclusion. Epidural, spinal and general anaesthesia for cesarean delivery are associated with increased intensity of subacute LBP, but without significant differences between these anaesthetic types. However, they do not increase the disability.

Key words:

neuraxial anaesthesia, general anaesthesia, cesarean delivery, subacute period, low back pain

Streszczenie

Informacje wprowadzające. Ból krzyża (LBP) jest dolegliwością powszechnie występującą u kobiet po cesarskim cięciu. W związku z tym niniejsze badanie przeprowadzono w celu oceny i porównania nasilenia podostrego bólu krzyża i niepełnosprawności wśród kobiet po cesarskim cięciu, u których zastosowano różne typy znieczulenia.

Metodologia. Niniejsze retrospektywne badanie kohortowe zostało przeprowadzone na 38 kobietach. „26 z nich miało cięcie cesarskie, którego stan oceniono po 6 do 12 tygodniach od porodu. Kobiety zostały zaklasyfikowane do: grupy znieczulenia zewnątrzoponowego (Grupa A) n = 6, grupy znieczulenia podpajęczynówkowego (Grupa B) n = 13, grupy znieczulenia ogólnego (Grupa C) n = 7. Wśród pacjentek były pierworódki lub wieloródki, które nie otrzymywały znieczulenia przez co najmniej rok przed ostatnim porodem; pozostałe 12 kobiet stanowiło grupę kontrolną (Grupa D), która nigdy nie była w ciąży ani nie była poddana znieczuleniu”.

Wyniki. Średnie wartości wizualnej skali analogowej (VAS) w grupie A, grupie B, grupie C i grupie D wynosiły odpowiednio $5,00 \pm 1,67$, $4,62 \pm 1,12$, $5,14 \pm 1,21$ i $2,17 \pm 0,71$. Test ANOVA wykazał istotną różnicę w VAS ($p = 0,0001$; $p < 0,05$) pomiędzy czterema grupami, natomiast test post-hoc wykazał nieistotne różnice ($p = 1000$; $p > 0,05$) pomiędzy trzema grupami poddawany znieczuleniu. Również średnie wartości wskaźnika niepełnosprawności Oswestry (ODI) w tych samych czterech grupach wynosiły odpowiednio $26,00 \pm 16,68$, $27,00 \pm 11,72$, $30,00 \pm 6,87$ i $25,00 \pm 9,33$. Test ANOVA wykazał nieistotną różnicę w ODI ($p = 0,838$; $p < 0,05$) pomiędzy czterema grupami.

Wniosek. Znieczulenie zewnątrzoponowe, podpajęczynówkowe i ogólne do cięcia cesarskiego wiąże się ze zwiększoną intensywnością podostrego bólu krzyża, jednak bez istotnych różnic między tymi rodzajami znieczuleń. Znieczulenia nie powodują zintensyfikowania niepełnosprawności.

Słowa kluczowe

Znieczulenie nerwu osiowego, znieczulenie ogólne, poród cesarski, podostry ból krzyża

Introduction

Cesarean section is one of the most common surgical procedures in obstetrics, and it is also one of the oldest medical procedures [1]. Despite the international approaches to decrease the rate of cesarean delivery universally [2], In Egypt, the prevalence of CS has risen dramatically over the last decade, with the most recent Egypt Demographic and Health Survey (EDHS) reporting a rate of 52 percent [3].

The anaesthetic strategy used for caesarean section is determined by several criteria, including the patient's physiological condition, the practitioner's level of experience, drug availability, and equipment, among others [4]. The gold standard anaesthesia for caesarean delivery has been and continues to be neuraxial anaesthesia [5]. The most frequent central neuraxial anaesthesia techniques used as the surgical procedure and for labor and delivery are spinal and epidural anaesthesia [6]. For neuraxial anaesthesia, two popular approaches are median and paramedian. The median technique is the most usual, and it entails passing the needle through the supraspinous, interspinous, and ligamentum flavum ligaments [7]. The needle is typically inserted in the L3/4 or L4/5 interspace for neuraxial anaesthesia [8].

Low back pain (LBP) is a typical mild but unpleasant consequence of epidural anaesthesia. It is thought to be caused by needle trauma and local anaesthetic myotoxicity [9], postdural puncture backache (PDPB), which is defined as a persistent pain around the puncture site without radicular pain, is a common consequence following spinal anaesthesia and some studies reported that in the adult population, the incidence of low back pain after spinal anaesthesia is similar to that after general anaesthesia. [10].

Low back pain can be described by duration such as acute low back pain (when pain lasting for a maximum of 6 weeks), subacute low back pain (when pain lasting from the 6th to the 12th weeks) and chronic low back pain (when pain lasting over the 12th weeks) [11]. Back pain following anaesthesia may be attributed to ligament, fascia, or bone injuries with localized bleeding; rigidity of the spine; anaesthesia-induced relaxation of the paraspinal muscles; flattening of the typical lumbar convexity; and stretching and straining of the lumbosacral ligaments and joint capsules [10].

This study investigated if the epidural, spinal anaesthesia or general anaesthesia were a relative risk for subacute low back pain and disability after cesarean delivery and if there were differences between the subacute low back pain intensity between the three anaesthetic groups. To fill the gap in this point as there was a controversy regarding the effect of different anaesthetic types for cesarean delivery on subacute low back pain and disability. Based on the hypothesis that all of the studied obstetric anaesthetic types have neither a relative risk for subacute low back pain nor disability after cesarean section, we outlined this study to investigate the link between the studied anaesthetic types for cesarean section and the subacute low back pain as well as the disability.

Methodology

Study design

Retrospective cohort study.

Settings

This study was conducted in South Valley University Teaching Hospitals between 1-5-2021 and 8-9-2021, Data were deidentified through hiding the identification codes of participants. The information regarding patient registry as phone number, date of delivery, type of delivery and anaesthesia were collected from the database of South Valley University Teaching Hospitals. However, the personal data as: the body weight, the height, BMI, waist to hip ratio, the previous history of non-myofascial low back pain and parity (the number of times a woman had delivered a fetus with a 24 weeks gestational age or more, whatever the born child was alive or stillborn [12]) were taken before assessment of the participants as these data were not available from the university database.

we contacted the participant by the mobile phone through their obtained numbers for assessment of the intensity of subacute low back pain and the disability.

Ethics Statement

The procedures confirmed by the International Ethical Committee Clearance of the Faculty of Physical Therapy at Cairo University (No: 012\001954) and were registered on Clinical-Trials gov.

Participants

Thirty-eight women participated in this study; Their ages were from 18 to 35-year-old to control age as age more than 35 is an effect modifier to low back pain [13], body mass index (BMI) were less than 30 and waist: hip ratio was less than 1 to adjust confounders as obesity and truncal obesity [14].

Except 12 of them who were the control group (no previous pregnancy or anaesthesia), All the other 26 women gave birth through a cesarean delivery to adjust confounding effect of cesarean delivery on low back pain [15]. who exposed to different anaesthetic techniques (epidural, spinal or general), they were either primiparous or multiparous who did not experience any type of anaesthesia for at least one year prior to the last delivery, assessment of subacute low back pain intensity (the primary outcome) using the VAS and low back pain related functional disability (secondary outcome) using the ODI was between the 6th week to the 12th week postnatal (Figure 1). We excluded women who delivered through vaginal delivery and any woman complained of previous non-myofascial low back dysfunctions as women who were diagnosed with lumbar disc prolapse or spondylolisthesis.

Variables of Interest

In this study, the independent variables of interest were cesarean delivery with the epidural anaesthesia, the spinal anaesthesia and the general anaesthesia. While the dependent variables were the intensity of subacute low back pain and disability after cesarean delivery measured with the VAS and ODI, respectively. The index date was defined as 6 weeks to 12 weeks after cesarean delivery of the participants enrolled in this study except the participants of the control group.

To assess the independent impacts of the anaesthetic groups on subacute low back pain intensity and disability, we adjusted for the possible confounding variables, such as the patient's BMI, waist to hip ratio and age in years as an effect modifier.

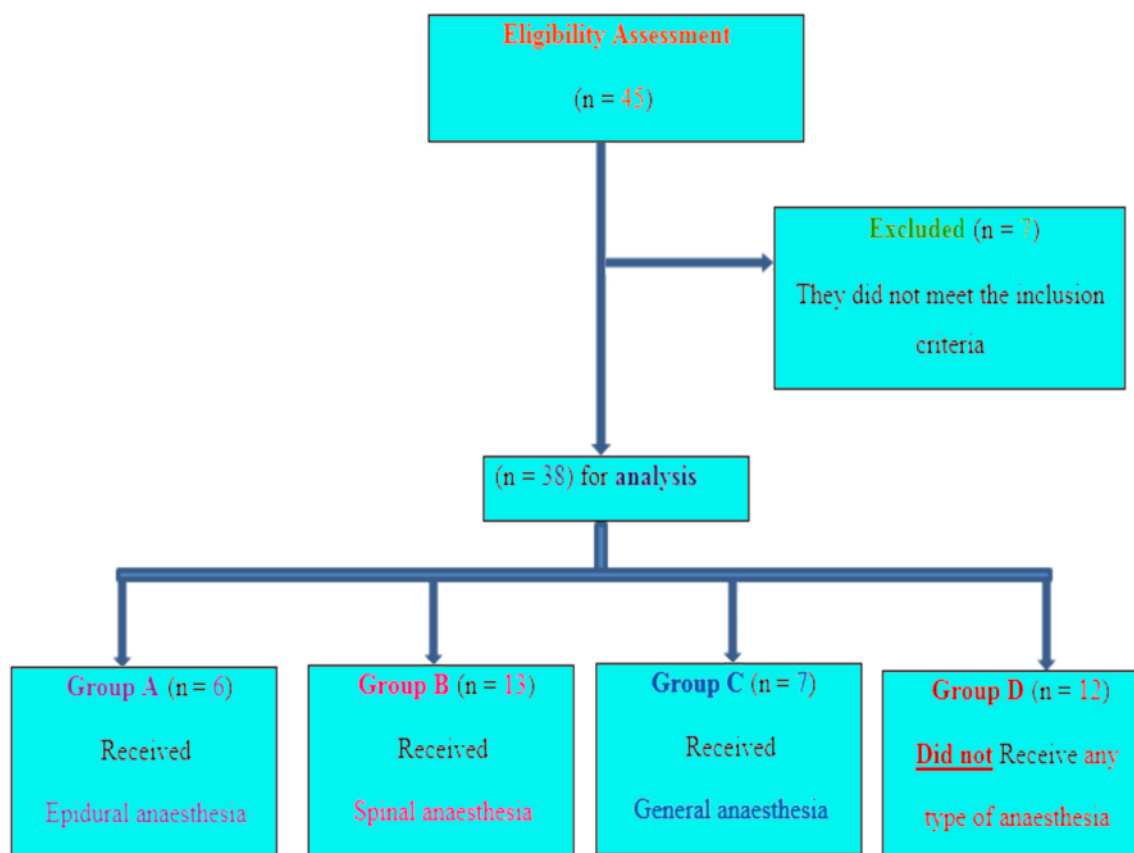


Figure 1. Flow chart of the study

Materials for evaluation

Visual analogue scale (VAS)

It was used to measure low back pain intensity in women in all groups.

As its reliability for disability when examined was moderate to good [16], and it is an interval scale investigated by many studies in which most of their findings showed that it is a valid and reliable scale [17]. Scores are recorded by doing a handwritten mark on the 10-cm line which represents a continuum between “no pain” and “worst pain.” [18].

Oswestry Disability Index (ODI) Version 2.1a

It was used to measure disability in different activities of daily livings in women in all groups.

The ODI was not only a reliable but also a valid suitable scale for assessment of

disability among LBP patients [19]. The Oswestry Low Back Pain Disability Index is a ten-item self-assessment questionnaire with six levels of replies ranging from 0 to 5. Pain, personal care, lifting and moving objects, walking, sitting, standing, difficulties during sleep induced by low back pain, sex life, social life, and traveling are examples of these items. The proportion of disability (the score obtained divided by 50 and multiplied by 100) varies from 0% (no disability) to 100% (disability) (complete disability). The following scores are used to interpret the scale: 0 to 20%: minor impairment; 20 to 40%: moderate disability; 40 to 60%: severe disability; 60 to 80%: debilitating low back [20].

Statistical analysis

The statistical analysis was conducted by using statistical SPSS Package program version 25 for Windows (SPSS, Inc., Chicago, IL). Data are expressed as mean and standard deviation for age, BMI, PPD/week, parity/child, VAS, and ODI variables. One way analysis of variance (ANOVA-test) to compare among the 4 groups; epidural anathesia group (Group A), spinal anathesia group (Group B), general anathesia group (Group C), and control group (Group D) for age, BMI, PPD/week, parity/child, VAS, and ODI variables. Bonferroni correction test was used to compare between pairwise between groups for VAS variable which P-value was significant from ANOVA-test. All statistical analyses were significant at probability ($P \leq 0.05$).

Results

Data collection

Data were screened, for normality assumption test and homogeneity of variance. Normality test of data using Shapiro-Wilk test was used, that reflect the data was normally distributed ($P > 0.05$) after removal outliers that detected by box and whiskers plots. Additionally, Levene's test for testing the homogeneity of variance revealed that there was no significant difference ($P > 0.05$). So, the data are normally distributed and parametric analysis is done.

In the current study, a total of 38 patients participated and they were classified into three groups according to the type of anaesthesia and the fourth group was the control group who did

not have previous pregnancy or receive any type of anaesthesia. No significant differences in age ($P = 0.925$; $P > 0.05$) and BMI ($P = 0.059$; $P > 0.05$), but there were significant differences in both Postpartum duration (PPD)/week, ($P = 0.0001$;

$P < 0.05$) and parity/child ($P = 0.0001$; $P < 0.05$) among the four groups and these significant differences were because of the presence of the control group who did not have any previous pregnancy or postpartum duration (Table 1).

Table 1. Comparison of general characteristics among the 4 groups

Items	Group A (n = 6)	Group B (n = 13)	Group C (n = 7)	Group D (n = 12)	P-value
Age [year]	23.50 ± 3.72	23.62 ± 4.07	24.86 ± 7.17	23.92 ± 1.78	0.925
BMI [kg/cm ²]	26.60 ± 1.98	24.63 ± 3.26	27.37 ± 2.18	23.52 ± 3.89	0.059
PPD/week	7.33 ± 0.51	8.08 ± 2.21	8.43 ± 1.81	0.00 ± 0.00	0.0001*
Parity/child	1.33 ± 0.51	2.15 ± 1.06	2.57 ± 1.71	0.00 ± 0.00	0.0001*

Group A: Epidural anaesthesia group; Group B: Spinal anaesthesia group; Group C: General anaesthesia group; Group D: Control group.
Data are expressed as mean ± standard deviation (SD)

P-value: probability value; P-value > 0.05: non-significant; *Significant ($P < 0.05$)

When the three anaesthetic groups (Epidural, Spinal and General) were compared without the control group, there were no significant differences in means of both postpartum duration

PPD/week ($P = 0.568$; $P > 0.05$) and parity ($P = 0.189$; $P > 0.05$) (Table 2).

Table 2. Comparison of general characteristics among the 3 anaesthetic groups

Items	Group A (n = 6)	Group B (n = 13)	Group C (n = 7)	P-value
PPD/week	7.33 ± 0.51	8.08 ± 2.21	8.43 ± 1.81	0.568
Parity/child	1.33 ± 0.51	2.15 ± 1.06	2.57 ± 1.71	0.189

Group A: Epidural anaesthesia group; Group B: Spinal anaesthesia group; Group C: General anaesthesia group

Data are expressed as mean ± standard deviation (SD) P-value: probability value; P-value > 0.05: non-significant

The mean values of VAS in epidural anaesthesia group (Group A), spinal anaesthesia group (Group B), general anaesthesia group (Group C), and control group (Group D) were 5.00 ± 1.67 , 4.62 ± 1.12 , 5.14 ± 1.21 , and 2.17 ± 0.71 , respectively (Table 3). The statistical analysis by ANOVA test revealed that there was significant difference in VAS ($P = 0.0001$; $P < 0.05$) among groups A, B, C, and D.

While the mean values of ODI in epidural anaesthesia group (Group A), spinal anaesthesia group (Group B), general anaesthesia group (Group C), and control group (Group D) were 26.00 ± 16.68 , 27.00 ± 11.72 , 30.00 ± 6.87 , and 25.00 ± 9.33 , respectively (Table 3). The statistical analysis by ANOVA test revealed that there was no significant difference in ODI ($P = 0.838$; $P < 0.05$) among groups A, B, C, and D.

Table 3. Comparison of VAS and ODI among the 4 groups

Items	Group A (n = 6)	Group B (n = 13)	Group C (n = 7)	Group D (n = 12)	P-value
VAS	5.00 ± 1.67	4.62 ± 1.12	5.14 ± 1.21	2.17 ± 0.71	0.0001*
ODI	26.00 ± 16.68	27.00 ± 11.72	30.00 ± 6.87	25.00 ± 9.33	0.838

Epidural anaesthesia group; Group B: Spinal anaesthesia group; Group C: General anaesthesia group; Group D: Control group

Data are expressed as mean ± standard deviation (SD)

P-value: probability value; P-value > 0.05: non-significant; * Significant ($P < 0.05$)

Post-hoc test (Bonferroni test) and mean difference for VAS between pairwise of the groups (Table 4). There were significant differences ($P = 0.0001$; $P < 0.05$) in VAS between group A versus group D, group B versus group D, and group C versus

group D, but no significant differences ($P = 1.000$; $P > 0.05$) between group A versus group B, group A versus group C, and group B versus group C. Bonferroni test and mean differences between groups showed that the spinal anaesthesia group (Group B)

gave the lowest mean differences response of VAS (MD = 2.44), followed by epidural anaesthesia group (Group A; MD = 2.83),

and then general anaesthesia group (Group C; MD = 2.97) compared to the control group (Group D).

Table 4. Post-hoc test (Bonferroni test) of VAS between pairwise of groups

Variable	Items	Post-hoc (Bonferroni test)		
		Mean difference (MD)	95% CI	P-value
VAS	Group A vs. Group B	0.38	-1.18 – 1.95	1.000
	Group A vs. Group C	0.14	-1.91 – 1.62	1.000
	Group A vs. Group D	2.83	1.25 – 4.42	0.0001*
	Group B vs. Group C	0.52	-2.01 – 0.96	1.000
	Group B vs. Group D	2.44	1.18 – 3.72	0.0001*
	Group C vs. Group D	2.97	1.47 – 4.49	0.0001*

Group A: Epidural anaesthesia group; Group B: Spinal anaesthesia group; Group C: General anaesthesia group; Group D: Control group

CI: confidence interval; P-value: probability value; P-value > 0.05: non-significant.

* Significant ($P < 0.05$)

Discussion

When comparing post-partum women who had a caesarean section to those who had a normal vaginal delivery, the prevalence of lower backache is higher [15]. This study is the first study that assess and compare the intensity of subacute low back pain and disability in women who underwent caesarean delivery after the 6th week to the 12th week postnatal with different anaesthetic types and compare it to the control group who did not have any previous pregnancy or any type of anaesthesia to investigate the difference in subacute low back pain intensity among different anaesthetic types.

Limitations of this study were lack of cooperation from some women in some groups as in the epidural and general anaesthetic groups. Also, the decreased rate of using epidural and general anaesthetic types for caesarean delivery nowadays influenced on the number of participants in these two groups relatively with group of spinal anaesthesia or the control group as neuraxial anesthesia specially spinal anesthesia has been advocated as the excellent choice for uncomplicated elective caesarean section because the neuraxial anaesthesia avoids the respiratory implication, has less risk of gastric content aspiration, and it can be easily performed [21].

Our findings showed significant differences between the mean values of VAS that reflect the intensity of subacute low back pain in all women underwent caesarean delivery whatever the type of anaesthesia (Epidural, Spinal and General) compared to the control group who did not have any previous pregnancy or any type of anaesthesia and these findings that revealed that there was a significance in the mean difference of VAS between the group of caesarean delivery with epidural anaesthesia and the control group comes in agreement with Chia et al., [22] who concluded that caesarean section with epidural anaesthesia might raise the risk of subsequent low backache compared to normal labor. Also, another study by Macarthur and colleagues., [23] concluded that the relation between back pain and epidural anaesthesia is most likely causal. It appears to result from a combination of impact of analgesia and stressful labor posture.

We found that there was a significance in the mean difference of VAS between the group of caesarean delivery with spinal anaesthesia and the control group with the VAS score of spinal anaesthetic group was 4.62 (moderate pain intensity) comes in agreement with the study of Tariq et al., [24] who revealed that 78% of housewives complained of low backache after caesarean delivery under spinal anesthesia with 44.9% of them had moderate intensity pain.

Also, we found that there was no significance in the mean of VAS scores between the group of caesarean delivery with spinal anaesthesia and the general anaesthesia group and this was supported by the study of Standl et al., [25] who concluded that the incidence of low back pain after spinal anaesthesia and general anaesthesia has been observed to be similar.

Our results also showed that there were no significant differences in the mean of VAS between the anaesthetic groups (epidural, spinal and general) and these findings were run in the line with the findings of Benzon et al., [11] who concluded in their review that the use of neuraxial anaesthesia (spinal or epidural anaesthesia) in the adult, non-obstetric, and obstetric populations should be based on the benefits of the technique rather than the occurrence of back pain following the procedure, as back pain following neuraxial anaesthesia in the adult population is similar to that following general anaesthesia.

We found that disability ODI percent did not reflect the intensity of pain VAS score in the control group and this comes in agreement with the findings of Solomon & Roopchand-Martin [26] who concluded that the low to moderate correlation between pain VAS and disability ODI speaks to the seriousness of assessing both the intensity of LBP and disability in LBP population and not obtaining information from one scale to make assumptions about the other.

On the other hand, we found there was subacute low back pain that lasted 6-12 weeks after caesarean delivery in the neuraxial groups which is contradicted to the findings of Chan., [27] who found that pain was limited to the injection site, mild to moderate in intensity, and only lasted up to four days. Another contradicted study to our findings was done by Malevic et al.,

[28] who concluded that the labor pain anaesthetic techniques (epidural and general anaesthesia) did not cause the increased risk of low back pain in the early postnatal period and after six months of delivery.

Our study found that the scores of pain VAS were not matched with the percent of disability ODI specially in the control group and this is confuted with the findings of Alagami et al., [29] who examined the ODI Arabic version validity and found that the correlations of the Oswestry Disability Index (ODI) with the pain VAS was significant ($r = 0.708$, $P < 0.01$). Also, another study conducted by McGorry & Webster [30] concluded that a significant effect of pain intensity on disability was found and Pain intensity can affect disability and this is contradicted with our results which proved that the pain VAS score did not affect the ODI disability as in the control group.

Further studies with larger sample size and objective methods to assess pain and biomechanical function of the low back are needed to ensure our statistical findings.

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Conclusion

It can be concluded that different anaesthetic types such as epidural, spinal, and general anaesthesia for cesarean delivery were associated with increased intensity of subacute low back pain, but there were no significant differences in pain intensity between these different types of anaesthesia. However, the subacute low back pain intensity of the spinal anaesthetic group was the lowest followed by epidural anaesthetic group and then general anaesthetic group. Also, these different anaesthetic types did not increase the functional disability that related to low back pain.

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