Multidisciplinary approaches to supporting whole person gender affirming perioperative health and care

Fenway Health
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Outline

• Background on WPATH surgery clearance
• Holistic perioperative approaches
• Vaginoplasty
• Masculinizing chest surgery
• Phalloplasty
• Sexual Health
• Perioperative hormones
• Cases
WPATH Criteria – Are There Limitations?

• How to handle patients who lack access to appropriate mental health services?

• Does the process encourage patients to “game the system”?  
  – While at the same time appearing to serve as a “gatekeeper”

• Does not include any explicit assessment of health literacy and psychosocial functioning  
  – This becomes very important as MediCaid and safety net populations now also have access to such surgeries
Perioperative Care Navigation - Workflow

Functional assessment
- Housing
- Healthcare Literacy
- Social & family support
- Psychosocial functioning

“WPATH” assessment
- Diagnosis
- Eligibility & Readiness Assessment
- Informed Consent

Education & resources
- Physical
- Emotional
- Infrastructure
- Knowledge base

Reassessment
- Housing
- Social & family support
- Psychosocial functioning

Waiting list

End of surgical phase

Recovery location?
- Transportation?
- Assistance?

- Surgery & immediate postoperative care

- Education & resources
- Reassessment

“WPATH” assessment

Outcomes

• Studies seem to show 3 factors that place pts at risk of regret:
  – Major coexisting psychiatric conditions
  – Limited life-experience in the new gender role prior to surgery
  – Unsatisfactory surgical results

• Reduction in suicidality postop

• One of best predictors of postop QOL is quality of surgical results
Postoperative Complications following Primary Penile Inversion Vaginoplasty among 330 Male-to-Female Transgender Patients.

Gaither TW¹, Awad MA², Osterberg EC³, Murphy GP¹, Romero A⁴, Bowers ML⁴, Breyer BN⁵.

Supplementary Table. Post-surgical complications and median time to complication in MTF-SRS (n=330)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Follow-up visit due to any complication</th>
<th>N (%)</th>
<th>Months from surgery, median (IQR)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>95 (28.7)</td>
<td>4.4 (1-11.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>236 (71.5)</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
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Complication

- Granulation tissue: 24 (7.3) months
- Vaginal pain: 17 (5.2) months
- Wound separation: 17 (5.2) months
- Poor cosmetic appearance: 16 (4.9) months
- Vaginal stenosis: 10 (3.0) months
- Rectourethral fistula: 3 (0.9) months
- Vesicourethral fistula: 3 (0.9) months
- Deflecting urinary stream/dribbling: 6 (1.8) months
- Infection: 5 (1.5) months
- Vaginal fissure: 2 (0.6) months
- Vaginal bleeding: 2 (0.6) months
- Difficulty with dilation: 3 (0.9) months
- Deep vein thrombosis/pulmonary embolism: 0
9% reoperation rate
• Overall complication rate 32.5% (N=1687)
• Meato-urethral stricture 14.4%
• Neovaginal stenosis 9.8%
• Wound infection 3.2%
• Less common:
  – Prolapse
  – Necrosis
  – RV fistula
• 72 of 77 pt attended at least 1 PT session
  – 42% had pelvic floor dysfxn
  – 37% had bowel dysfxn

• 69% of pelvic floor and 73% of bowel dysfxn resolved by first postop PT visit

• Postop pelvic floor dysfunction much lower in PT group (28% vs 86%m p<0.06)

• Hx of abuse strong predictor of floor dysfxn
  • 91% vs 31%, P<0.001
• 77% (31/40) had preop pelvic floor dysfunction

• 30 of 31 went to preop PT and 29 went to postop PT

• Surgery was not associated with development of pelvic floor dysfxn in those without it preop

• Statistically (clinically?) significant improvement in scores postop at 4 months.
• 20% of 54 trans women with neovaginas, median age 40, found to be positive for a high-risk HPV strain.

• No lesions found.
• 36% had at least 1 of 6,11,16,18

• What does having types 6 or 11 mean with respect to vaginal lesion risk?

• Tissue used in vaginoplasty:
  – Penile
  – Scrotal
  – Urethral
Penile/Urethral Cancer

- Incidence in range of 1/100,000 for penile, 4/1,000,000 for urethral
- Risk factors include
  - HPV (including type 6 for penile)
  - Trauma
  - Chronic inflammation
  - Lichen sclerosis, smegma? (penile)
Clinical Characteristics and Management of Neovaginal Fistulas After Vaginoplasty in Transgender Women.

van der Sluis WB, Bouman MB, Buncamper ME, Pilgot GL, Mullender MG, Meijerink WJ.

- 2.3% rate in N=1082 collected over 25 years
Clinical Characteristics and Management of Neovaginal Fistulas After Vaginoplasty in Transgender Women

Wouter B. van der Sluis, MD, Mark-Bram Bouman, MD, Marlon E. Buncamper, MD, Garry L.S. Pigot, MD, Margriet G. Mullender, PhD, and Wilhelmus J.H.J. Meijerink, MD, PhD

*Obstet Gynecol* 2016;127:1118–26
Fig. 3. Voiding cystourethrogram showing a urethrovaginal fistula of the penile skin-lined neovagina in a 36-year-old transgender woman.

Fig. 2. Endoscopic examination of the sigmoid-derived neovagina in a 28-year-old transgender woman showing fecal matter around the rectovaginal fistula entrance.
Fig. 1. Computed tomography scan using rectal contrast showing a recto-ovaginal fistula (arrow) of the penile skin-lined neovagina in a 26-year-old transgender woman. Depicted are transverse (A) and coronal (B) planes.

Figure 2  Example of a urethral meatus pointing forwards, with a bulky corpus spongiosum remnant.
Urinary stream problems

• Weak or deflecting stream

• Consider urethral stenosis, asymmetric labia, adhesion band

• Often requires revision surgery
Neovaginal hair

• Remove with a forcep

• Hair removal cream – patch test first
STI screening after vaginoplasty?

• Penile inversion technique – skin lined vagina
  – ? Urethral mucosa used

• Sigmoid colon vaginoplasty
  – Less common
  – Mucosa
Neovaginal Flora

• 50 trans women evaluated by a variety of microbiological techniques
• 1/50 showed lactobacilli
• Mean pH 5.8
• No candida
• Mix of skin, colonic, vaginal / BV flora
• No association between sx and any species
Approach to neovaginal discharge

- Skin-lined cavity
- pH = neutral
- Does not self-clean
  - sebum, dead skin, lubricant, ejaculate
- “Normal” flora?
- Skin infection vs vaginal infection
- Fistula?
- Use an anoscope for exam
Granulation Tissue

- Fibroblastic connective tissue laying down new connective (scar) tissue matrix

- Inflammatory but not infected (usually)

- Silver nitrate

- Moderate potency topical steroid
Other Post-Vaginoplasty Issues

- Persistent/excess erectile tissue
- Urinary stress/urge incontinence
  - Prostatic changes?
- UTI
- Hematoma
- Colonic vaginoplasty considerations


Vaginoplasty Complications.
• Case series (N=100)

• Single surgeon

• No statistical association between hematoma and T use
Top Surgery Postoperative Care

• Dressings

• Binder for 4-6 weeks

• Scars
  – Hypertrophic -> kenalog?
Seroma/Hematoma Office Management

- Simple percutaneous drainage
- Can consult with surgeon
Phalloplasty Complications – Contributing Factors

• Flap design that includes tubularization of tissue (1–2 times) with an associated increased risk for ischemia
• Dependent, unstable position
• Colonized, moist recipient site
• Area of major friction during ambulation
• Acting as urinary conduit


Phalloplasty Flap-Related Complication.
Esmonde N¹, Bluebond-Langner R², Berli JU³.
Possible Postop Complication Syndromes – Phalloplasty

- Full phallic loss
- Partial flap loss
- Urethral loss
- Infection
- Hematoma
- Wound dehiscence
- Miscellaneous
Phalloplasty – Urologic Complications

- Strictures (25%-58%)

- Urinary pooling 2/2 urethral irregularities and non-laminar flow

- Lifelong urologic follow-up recommended


Urologic Complications After Phalloplasty or Metoidioplasty.

Nikolavsky D¹, Hughes M², Zhao LC³.
Best matches for (estrogen or estradiol or hormone) perioperative thromboembolism:

**Perioperative Management of Female Hormone Medications.**

**European guidelines on perioperative venous thromboembolism prophylaxis: Surgery in the elderly.**

**Anesthesia in adults with congenital heart disease.**

Switch to our new best match sort order

Search results

Items: 21 to 40 of 43  Selected: 3
• Only single mention of estrogen

• Over age 70, “consider addressing” (Grade 2C)
Systematic review identified 18 studies

Quality of studies was mixed

“There is insufficient evidence to support routine discontinuation of testosterone or spironolactone in transgender patients undergoing scheduled surgical procedures. Given inconsistent risk data about the risks associated with estrogen, decisions about whether or not to discontinue estrogen treatment should keep individual risk factors and concerns in mind”
• Review of literature

Conclusion: “Until additional studies are performed, the risks and benefits must be weighed on an individual basis with consideration of prophylaxis when a decision is made to continue these medications in the perioperative period. Part of this decision making includes the risk of fetal harm in an unwanted pregnancy in preparation for nonobstetric surgery versus an increased risk of venous thromboembolism.”
• 108 cases matched to 210 controls

• No association between menopausal HRT and clot risk.

Conclusion: “We found no association between perioperative hormone replacement and post-operative thrombosis in patients undergoing major orthopaedic surgery. Routine discontinuation of these medications preoperatively--and possibly in other situations predisposing to thrombosis, such as acute medical illness--may be unnecessary in patients receiving appropriate pharmacologic antithrombotic prophylaxis.”
Review article

Discusses several studies that failed to find a difference, and one with odds ratio 3.3

They then conclude (how?): “Ultimately, it should be advocated that combined or single-medication oral contraceptive therapy and hormone-replacement therapy be held for 4 to 6 weeks before surgery and restarted at least 2 weeks after surgery or once the patient is fully ambulatory.”
Care abroad

• Thailand
• Europe
• Mexico
Sexual Health

• What is a clitoris?

• How does orgasm work without penetration/ejaculation?

• What parts of my neophallus are erogenously sensitive?
Sexual Function Post Vaginoplasty

- Poor sexual function before surgery is a reliable predictor of poor sexual function after surgery.

- Patients with difficulty or lack of experience achieving erogenous genital sensation should be encouraged to self-stimulate before their surgery.

- Depression, performance anxiety, and chronic pain interfere with recovery of erogenous sensation and/or orgasm after vaginoplasty.

- Neuroplasticity, gray-matter changes and synapses strengthen in response to new stimuli and repetition.


Sexual Function After Shallow and Full-Depth Vaginoplasty: Challenges, Clinical Findings, and Treatment Strategies- Urologic Perspectives.

Garcia MM1.
Case 1

• 28 y/o trans woman with clitoral pain on arousal.

• Severe pain limiting daily function

• Pt has significant behavioral health comorbidities

• Exam shows point tenderness in clitoral area, otherwise normal
Case 2

- 33 y/o transgender woman with introitus pain, especially with arousal

- Exam shows excess tissue in area of introitus

- Referred back to surgeon -> excess erectile tissue
Case 3

• 39 y/o transgender man for preop for phalloplasty with outside private office

• Pt has PPO and has worked directly with surgeon office up to this point, now here for me to “sign the papers”
Case 3

• Pt has long hx recurrent dysuria with negative u/a but has had various cultures come back over the years with <10,000cfu of several organisms

• Has not discussed this or disclosed this to the urologist
Case 4

• 22 y/o trans man has top surgery in another state

• Now 2 weeks postop and has developed a hematoma. He is worried about cosmesis. What do you do?
Case 5

• 66 year old transgender woman with TBI, moderate cognitive impairment, anxiety, depression, and PTSD

• Often is confused, sometimes confabulates, and very limited memory

• Lives alone in SRO, no reliable social support. “Has friends” but does not know their names

• Wants vaginoplasty and FFS

• Going for oral surgery and thinks that surgeon told her to stop her hormones for 6 weeks before surgery.
Case 6

- Transgender man, 28 y/o, going for oopherectomy.

- “Should I leave one of my ovaries? The Ob-Gyn said I should because it will lower my risk of osteoporosis and heart disease”. 
Case 7

• Transfeminine person 55 y/o never on hormones, does not want to take them
• Wants orchiectomy only
Case 7

- Transfeminine person 55 y/o never on hormones, does not want to take them
- Wants orchiectomy only

- What if this person was 35?
Case 7

- Transfeminine person 55 y/o never on hormones, does not want to take them
- Wants orchiectomy only

- What if this person was 35?

- What if on hormones but T level is 330 pre-op?
Case 8

• “My (surgeon/friend/someone on Reddit) told me I can (lower/stop/cut in half) my hormone dose after (orchiectomy/vaginoplasty/oopherectomy) – is this true?