

Towards Best Practice in Perioperative Care for Head and Neck Cancer



The need to continually enhance the quality of care we provide to patients and their families calls us to action as a province. We therefore need to find ways to deliver better care in a more efficient and sustainable manner that adds value.

One way the surgical community is accomplishing this goal is through the implementation of Enhanced Recovery After Surgery (ERAS®) protocols.

ERAS® has become a global standard in the way patients undergoing surgery are managed, from preadmission through to discharge. Simple evidence-based strategies, such as reduced use of narcotics, carbohydrate loading, and early mobilization, have demonstrated significant reductions in surgical complications, less morbidity and reduced length of stay. Furthermore, patients report high levels of satisfaction with ERAS®.

Alberta is leading the development of several ERAS® protocols. The most recent ERAS® protocol, led by Cancer Strategic Clinical Network Senior Medical Director, Dr. Joseph Dort, describes evidence-based strategies for patients undergoing head and neck cancer surgery. Dr. Dort gathered a team of international content experts, representing the nations of Australia, Canada, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United States.

A systematic review was conducted for each topic within the protocol and used by the international panel to develop recommendations based on the GRADE system. All recommendations were discussed among the expert panel to ensure consensus. In total, recommendations for 17 unique ERAS® items were developed to comprise the head and neck cancer surgery protocol. The protocol has been endorsed by the ERAS® Society and will be submitted for publication within the coming weeks. It will also be presented this July at the American Head and Neck Society 9th International Conference on Head and Neck Cancer in Seattle, Washington.

In collaboration with the Surgery Strategic Clinical Network and the ERAS® Alberta Team, we will further develop performance measures for each of the 17 unique ERAS® items in the head and neck cancer surgery protocol. Recognizing that many surgeons in Alberta are already utilizing some of these ERAS® recommendations, our goal is to generalize the approach to implementation and measurement across the entire province. We expect that implementation of the protocol will result in better recovery for patients undergoing head and neck cancer surgery with fewer complications and higher value care delivery.

To learn more about the ERAS Society visit <http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/scns/Page10959.aspx>.