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EDITORIAL

Optimizing outcomes: Implementing enhanced recovery after surgery in orthopedic surgery

Sathish Muthu, Madhan Jeyaraman, Naveen Jeyaraman, Swaminathan Ramasubramanian

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Sathish Muthu, Department of Orthopedics, Orthopedic Research Group, Tamil Nadu, Coimbatore 641045, India

Sathish Muthu, Department of Orthopedics, Government Medical College, Tamil Nadu, Karur 639003, India

Sathish Muthu, Department of Biotechnology, Karpagam Academy of Higher Education, Tamil Nadu, Coimbatore 641021, India

Madhan Jeyaraman, Naveen Jeyaraman, Department of Orthopedics, ACS Medical College and Hospital, Dr MGR Educational and Research Institute, Tamil Nadu, Chennai 600077, India

Swaminathan Ramasubramanian, Department of Orthopedics, Government Medical College, Omandurar Government Estate, Tamil Nadu, Chennai 600002, India

Corresponding author: Sathish Muthu, DNB, MS, PhD, Assistant Professor, Department of Orthopedics, Orthopedic Research Group, Ramanathapuram, Tamil Nadu, Coimbatore 641045, India. drsathishmuthu@gmail.com

Abstract

In the realm of orthopedics, the adoption of enhanced recovery after surgery (ERAS) protocols marks a significant stride towards enhancing patient well-being. By embracing a holistic approach that encompasses preoperative counseling, dietary optimization, minimally invasive procedures, and early postoperative mobilization, these protocols have ushered in a new era of surgical care. Despite encountering hurdles like resistance to change and resource allocation challenges, the efficacy of ERAS protocols in improving clinical outcomes is undeniable. Noteworthy benefits include shortened hospital stays and bolstered improved patient-safety measures. Looking ahead, the horizon for ERAS in orthopedics appears bright, with an emphasis on tailoring care to individual needs, integrating cutting-edge technologies, and perpetuating research endeavors. This shift towards a more personalized, streamlined, and cost-efficient model of care underscores the transformative potential of ERAS in reshaping not only orthopedic surgery but also the journey to patient recovery. This editorial details the scope and future of ERAS in the orthopedic specialty.

Key Words: Enhanced recovery after surgery; Orthopedic surgery; Perioperative care; Personalized care; Patient reported outcome measure; Complications

Core Tip: Enhanced recovery after surgery (ERAS) protocols in orthopedics significantly improve patient outcomes by reducing recovery time, the complication rate, and hospital stay through a multidisciplinary approach involving preoperative counseling, nutritional optimization, minimally invasive techniques, and early mobilization. Despite facing challenges in implementation, such as resistance to change and resource demands, ERAS protocols have proven their efficacy in improving clinical outcomes, including reduced hospital stay and enhanced patient safety. The future of ERAS in orthopedics is promising, with a focus on personalized care, technological integration, and ongoing research. The evolution towards more patient-centered, efficient, and cost-effective care underscores the potential of ERAS to revolutionize orthopedic surgery and patient recovery processes.

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INTRODUCTION

The evolution of perioperative care has been significantly influenced by enhanced recovery after surgery (ERAS) protocols that were initially developed for colorectal surgery and are now widely applied in orthopedic procedures[1]. ERAS signifies a departure from traditional methods, focusing on a multidisciplinary approach that includes surgeons, anesthesiologists, nurses, and physiotherapists, all working together to enhance patient outcomes[2]. This shift is particularly noteworthy in orthopedic surgery, a field historically reliant on conventional recovery protocols and now embracing ERAS to improve patient care. ERAS in orthopedics aims to reduce recovery time, lower the complication rate, and increase patient satisfaction through a series of strategic components. These include preoperative counseling, nutritional optimization, use of minimally invasive techniques, and early mobilization, each having a vital role in expediting patient recovery[3]. This comprehensive strategy contrasts sharply with previous practices that often resulted in longer hospital stays and a delayed return to normal activities. This editorial discusses the challenges and benefits of implementing ERAS in orthopedic surgery that are described by recent clinical studies. It also looks ahead at the potential future of ERAS in this field, particularly focusing on personalized care and the incorporation of digital health tools, hinting at how ERAS protocols might continue to transform postoperative recovery in orthopedic surgery.

The inception of ERAS protocols marked a pivotal shift in perioperative care, initially gaining traction in colorectal surgery and later extending to orthopedics[4]. Characterized by a comprehensive, multidisciplinary approach, ERAS drastically contrasts with traditional recovery methods, particularly in orthopedics, where longer hospital stays and recovery times were once standard. Integrating the expertise of surgeons, anesthesiologists, nurses, and physiotherapists, ERAS redefines patient management at all surgical stages[5]. ERAS signifies a significant evolution in surgical care, incorporating various components such as patient education, nutritional optimization, minimally invasive techniques, and early mobilization. These elements aim to minimize surgical stress and accelerate recovery, representing a shift towards patient-centered, evidence-based practices[6,7].

Originally prominent in colorectal surgery, the adoption of ERAS in orthopedics was a change from protracted, traditional recovery protocols to a streamlined, patient-focused approach[4]. The multidisciplinary essence of ERAS is crucial, transforming patient care from preoperative to postoperative stages[5]. ERAS originated in Europe during the 1990s, challenging conventional perioperative methods that often led to prolonged hospital stays and delayed recovery [1]. Its development is underpinned by the understanding that surgical stress and metabolic change significantly impact patient outcomes. Thus, ERAS embodies a holistic, patient-centered approach[2]. Contrasting traditional orthopedic protocols that involved extended bed rest and delayed feeding, ERAS advocates for early mobilization, nutritional support, and enhanced pain management. These practices have been shown to reduce complications, decrease hospital durations, and enhance patient satisfaction, marking ERAS as a notable departure from conventional orthopedic practice and a stride toward reducing surgical stress and speeding recovery[3]. The article underscores the transformative impact of ERAS on both patient care and healthcare economics, advocating for its continued evolution and adaptation in the field of orthopedic surgery.

ERAS components in orthopedics

ERAS in orthopedic surgery integrates various critical elements, each uniquely contributing to the optimization of patient recovery and outcomes as shown in Table 1 and Figure 1.

Preoperative counseling: This key facet involves thorough patient education about the surgical procedure and recovery expectations. Informing patients comprehensively helps in mitigating anxiety and setting realistic expectations, which are pivotal for both mental and physical preparation before surgery. Such informed patients often have enhanced recovery outcomes and less anxiety, as indicated in studies[4].

Table 1 Core components of enhanced recovery protocols after orthopedic surgery

Component	Description	Benefits
Preoperative counseling	Informing patients about the surgery and expectations	Reduces anxiety, sets realistic expectations
Nutritional optimization	Improving nutritional status pre-surgery	Enhances healing, reduces complications
Minimally invasive techniques	Employing less invasive surgical methods	Minimizes tissue damage, quicker recovery
Pain management	Multimodal strategy to control pain	Promotes early activity, reduces opioid dependency
Early mobilization	Encouraging movement post-surgery	Shortens hospital stays, reduces complication risks

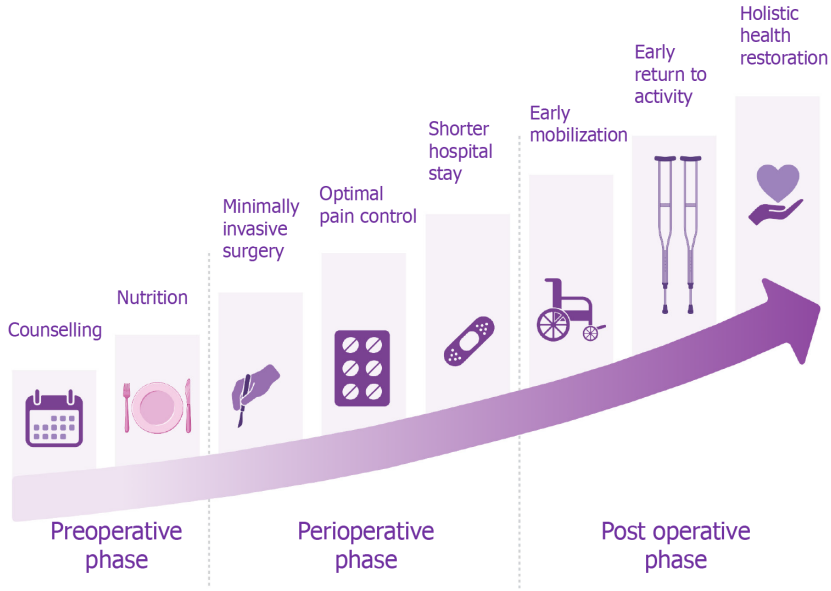

Figure 1 Phases of enhanced recovery after surgery management regimes.

Nutritional optimization: Assessing and improving patient nutritional status before surgery is an essential component of ERAS. Proper nutrition is crucial for fostering effective healing post-surgery, diminishing the risk of complications, and reinforcing the immune system. The link between adequate nutrition, improved wound healing, and reduced postoperative complications is well-established[5].

Minimally invasive techniques: ERAS emphasizes the use of state-of-the-art, less invasive surgical methods. These techniques are instrumental in minimizing tissue damage, leading to less postoperative pain and quicker recovery, thereby directly aligning with the objectives of ERAS to enhance patient outcomes. Such approaches are particularly beneficial in surgeries like joint replacement, offering faster recuperation and lower complication rates[6].

Pain management: A pivotal aspect of ERAS is the multimodal strategy for managing pain. This approach combines various methods to control pain, aiming to reduce reliance on opioids. Effective pain management is vital for promoting early physical activity and shortening the hospital stay. The use of regional anesthesia, non-opioid analgesics, and other pain control techniques not only provides effective pain relief but also curtails opioid-related adverse effects[7].

Early mobilization: Prompt mobilization post-surgery is a core element in ERAS. This practice is associated with shorter hospital stays, reduced risk of complications, and accelerated return to normal activities. Encouraging patients to move and ambulate shortly after surgery has been linked to improved functional outcomes and decreased incidence of complications like deep vein thrombosis. The combination of minimally invasive surgery and efficient pain management facilitates early mobilization[2].

Each component of the ERAS protocol for orthopedic surgery plays a vital role in expediting patient recovery, minimizing the length of hospitalization, and augmenting overall patient satisfaction. This integrative approach showcases the multifaceted nature of patient care, underscoring the importance of addressing various aspects of the perioperative process to achieve optimal outcomes.

ERAS for orthopedic subspecialties

Arthroplasty (hip and knee): ERAS protocols in arthroplasty focus on minimizing perioperative stress and improving recovery times through various interventions like preoperative education, optimized fluid management, and the use of

multimodal analgesia. Neuraxial anesthesia is preferred to general anesthesia owing to its association with reduced complications and faster recovery. Outpatient arthroplasty, facilitated by ERAS protocols, is becoming more prevalent, highlighting the efficacy of the protocol efficacy for enabling safe and effective recovery outside traditional hospital settings[8].

Adult reconstruction surgery: In the realm of adult reconstruction, particularly in surgeries involving the hip and knee, ERAS protocols emphasize early mobilization, pain management, and minimizing the length of hospital stay. For instance, maintaining normothermia and using goal-directed fluid therapy are critical components aimed at reducing postoperative complications and enhancing functional recovery[8].

Sport orthopedics: While the application of ERAS in sports orthopedics is not as extensively documented as in arthroplasty, key principles like reducing perioperative discomfort, early rehabilitation, and psychological support are integral. These components help athletes return to their sport at their pre-injury level more swiftly.

Trauma: The use of ERAS protocols in orthopedic trauma surgery focuses on rapid pain management and early physical therapy to reduce the duration of hospitalization and improve overall outcome. Effective fluid management and the prevention of hypothermia during surgery are also crucial elements tailored to meet the specific needs of trauma patients [8].

Spine surgery: ERAS in spine surgery incorporates specific strategies such as the selective use of minimally invasive techniques to reduce surgical stress and enhanced pain management protocols to facilitate quicker discharge and improved patient satisfaction[8].

The adaptation of ERAS protocols to specific surgical contexts within these subspecialties highlights their importance in enhancing patient recovery and the efficiency of care. Each component is carefully selected based on the surgical procedure and patient needs, demonstrating the versatile application of ERAS across orthopedic procedures[8,9].

Challenges to implementation

The integration of ERAS protocols into orthopedic settings faces several obstacles, with resistance to change being predominant. Healthcare professionals are often tied to conventional methods and may be reluctant to adopt ERAS protocols because of familiarity with existing practices and skepticism regarding new procedures[4]. Additionally, the demand for additional resources is a notable challenge. The implementation of ERAS requires substantial resources, including the need for thorough staff training and the procurement of necessary materials, which can be particularly taxing in settings with limited resources, as shown in Table 2[5].

A crucial component of successful ERAS integration is the extensive training of the multidisciplinary team. This encompasses not only the medical and surgical staff but also involves educating patients and their families about the ERAS protocols[6]. The complexities and variability inherent in orthopedic procedures further exacerbate these challenges. Convincing healthcare professionals to depart from established protocols and adopt ERAS requires substantial evidence of its benefits and a significant shift of institutional culture[2]. Initial resource intensiveness, including investments in training, patient education materials, and possibly new technologies, is another hurdle to ERAS implementation[3].

Several strategies can be employed to address these challenges,. Effective communication and education are key in mitigating resistance. Educating stakeholders about the advantages of ERAS, supported by clinical evidence and success stories, can facilitate a smoother transition to these new protocols[10]. Additionally, ensuring interdepartmental coordination of surgery, anesthesiology, nursing, and physiotherapy departments is crucial for the seamless adoption of ERAS protocols[2]. Furthermore, patient education regarding the ERAS pathway, their role in the recovery process, and setting realistic expectations can significantly improve compliance and outcomes[3]. Overcoming these barriers is essential for the successful implementation of ERAS in orthopedic surgery, which is instrumental in enhancing patient outcomes and operational efficiency.

Clinical outcomes and benefits

The integration of ERAS protocols in orthopedic procedures has yielded significant clinical advantages, as indicated in numerous studies. These protocols have been instrumental in minimizing postoperative complications, including lower incidences of infection and thromboembolic events. This decrease of complications is a key aspect of improving patient safety and overall health outcomes, as shown in Table 3[4]. Another notable advantage of ERAS is the reduction in the length of hospital stay. This benefit not only increases bed availability but also leads to a decrease in healthcare expenditures, making a strong case for the cost-effectiveness of ERAS[5,7]. Shorter hospital stays associated with ERAS primarily result from enhanced pain management, early mobilization, and optimal nutritional support, all of which contribute to faster recovery[10,11].

ERAS protocols have also improved patient satisfaction. Patients report higher contentment level, mainly because of expedited recovery, reduced discomfort, and the comprehensive care approach that includes detailed preoperative information. These factors collectively contribute to a positive patient experience[2,6]. Furthermore, the cost-effectiveness of ERAS cannot be overstated. By significantly curtailing the duration of hospital stays and diminishing the rate of postoperative complications, ERAS results in considerable savings for healthcare systems. This economic benefit, coupled with the aforementioned clinical outcomes, underscores the transformative impact of ERAS on both patient care and healthcare economics[3]. The success of ERAS in orthopedic surgery is largely attributed to its multimodal approach, which encompasses various aspects of patient care. However, its effective implementation necessitates the involvement of a committed multidisciplinary team and an ongoing commitment to enhancement through continuous research and

Table 2 Clinical outcomes after implementation of enhanced recovery after surgery protocols

Outcome measure	Traditional approach	Enhanced approach	Impact
Postoperative complications	Higher	Reduced	Improved patient safety
Length of hospital stay	Longer	Shorter	Enhanced bed availability, cost savings
Patient satisfaction	Variable	Higher	Positive patient experience
Recovery time	Prolonged	Accelerated	Faster return to normal activities

Table 3 Challenges and solutions in implementation of enhanced recovery after surgery

Challenge	Description	Proposed solution
Resistance to change	Reluctance to adopt new protocols	Effective communication, education on benefits
Resource demands	Need for training, materials	Resource allocation, comprehensive staff training
Training requirements	Extensive training of multidisciplinary team	Developing structured training programs
Integration of teams	Coordination among various departments	Promoting interdepartmental collaboration

feedback.

Future directions

The progressive trajectory of ERAS in orthopedic surgery is geared toward meticulous research and incremental enhancement of protocols. The focus is increasingly shifting towards personalized healthcare, where treatment is customized to meet the unique needs of each patient. This approach considers various patient-specific factors such as age, underlying health conditions and individual preferences[1,5]. The integration of cutting-edge technologies, especially digital health tools like wearable devices and telemedicine platforms, is anticipated to significantly improve patient monitoring and adherence to ERAS protocols[6,11]. Continuous research and development are fundamental to the evolution of ERAS, ensuring that protocols are not only up-to-date but also responsive to the diverse needs of different patient demographics and surgical procedures[2,4]. Moreover, there is an emphasis on enhancing the scope and efficacy of ERAS by incorporating feedback from patients and clinical outcomes, thereby fostering a cycle of perpetual improvement as shown in Table 4.

Table 4 Future directions of enhanced recovery after surgery in orthopedics

Area of focus	Description	Potential impact
Personalized care	Customized treatment per patient needs	Improved patient outcomes, enhanced satisfaction
Integration of digital tools	Use of wearables, telemedicine	Better monitoring, adherence to protocols
Continuous research and development	Ongoing updates to protocols	Keeping practices up-to-date, responsive to needs
Interdisciplinary collaboration	Collaborative patient care approach	Holistic patient management, improved care quality

Interdisciplinary collaboration is another key factor in advancing ERAS[7]. This collaboration ensures a holistic approach to patient care, combining expertise from various medical disciplines. Together, these elements represent the dynamic nature of ERAS in orthopedic surgery, underscoring its potential to continually advance patient outcomes and healthcare efficiency. The future of ERAS thus lies in its ability to adapt and evolve by embracing personalized care, technological advancement, interdisciplinary teamwork, and a relentless pursuit of research and innovation.

CONCLUSION

ERAS protocols are a transformative approach in orthopedic surgery, with significant benefits in reducing recovery times, minimizing complications, and improving patient satisfaction. The formation of multidisciplinary teams and the adoption of components such as preoperative counseling, nutritional optimization, minimally invasive techniques, and early mobilization are central to its success. Despite facing challenges in implementation, such as resistance to change and resource demands, ERAS protocols have proven their efficacy by improving clinical outcomes, including reduced hospital stay and enhanced patient safety. The future of ERAS in orthopedics is promising, with a focus on personalized care, technological integration, and ongoing research. This evolution towards more patient-centered, efficient, and cost-

effective care underscores the potential of ERAS to revolutionize orthopedic surgery and patient recovery.

FOOTNOTES

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Country of origin: India

ORCID number: Sathish Muthu 0000-0002-7143-4354; Madhan Jeyaraman 0000-0002-9045-9493; Naveen Jeyaraman 0000-0002-4362-3326; Swaminathan Ramasubramanian 0000-0001-8845-8427.

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