TIME MATTERS: ANALYZING FOLLOW-UP PRACTICES AND LONG-TERM RECURRENCE IN INGUINAL HERNIA REPAIR STUDIES

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BACKGROUND

Recent guidelines on inguinal hernia repair (IHR) emphasize the importance of a minimum follow-up period of 1 year, with a particular focus on long-term follow-up (>5 years) to adequately assess recurrence rates. Despite these recommendations, the consistency and methodology of follow-up reporting in the literature remain variable. This study aims to evaluate follow-up practices in comparative studies of inguinal hernia repair.

METHODS

A comprehensive search of studies published from 2018 onwards in top-cited surgery journals was conducted by two authors. We included studies that compared surgical techniques or materials for IHR and reported recurrence outcomes. We specifically looked for studies that defined one or more specific time points for assessing recurrence. We categorized the studies based on whether they used a minimum follow-up period of 1 year, as recommended, and identified those that provided long-term recurrence analysis (>5 years). We also analyzed the proportion of studies that presented a follow-up of less than 1 year postoperatively but suggested superiority among the intervention or control groups for recurrence analysis.

CONCLUSIONS

Our analysis identified that studies with shorter follow-up periods often conclude differences in recurrence between groups. This highlights the need to establish standardized follow-up durations to accurately evaluate recurrence rates.

RESULTS

Figure 1: PRISMA flow diagram of study selection.

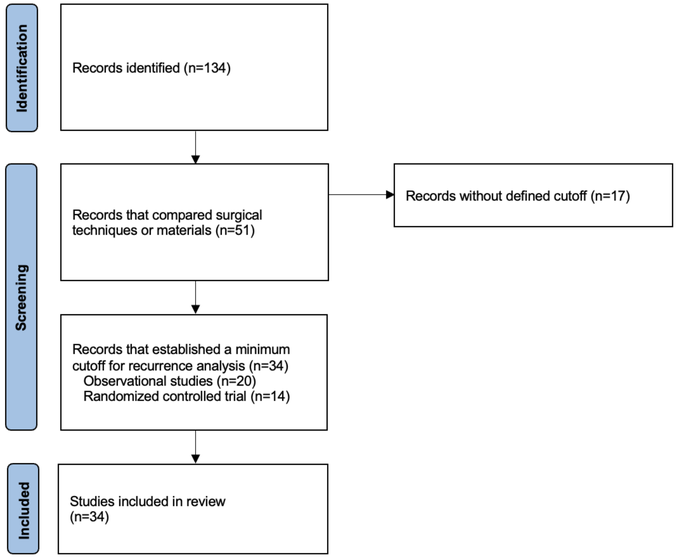


Table 1: Superiority claims across follow-up periods.

Follow-Up Duration Cutoff (Years)	Number of Studies Using Duration Cutoff	Number Claiming Superiority	Percent Claiming Superiority
<1	7	5	71.4%
1 to 5	22	7	31.8%
>5	5	1	20%

Table 2: Superiority claims by study design.

Study Design	Number of Studies Using Study Design	Number Claiming Superiority	Percent Claiming Superiority
Randomized controlled trial	14	1	7.1%
Observational	20	10	50%

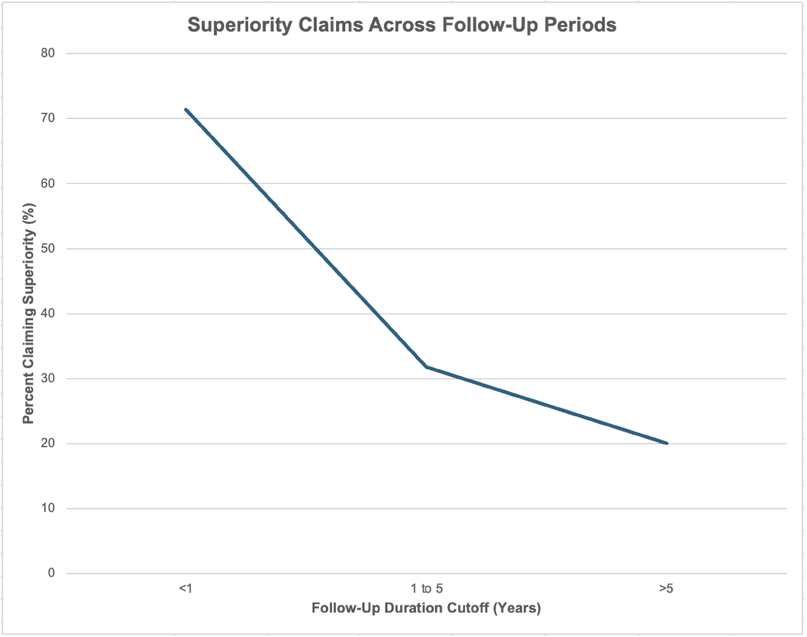


Figure 2: Trends of superiority claims across follow-up periods.

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