

00380 A Qualitative Study on the Importance of Thyroidectomy Scar to Asian Patients

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Aims: Thyroidectomy can be performed via conventional neck crease incision or minimally invasive surgery (MIS); the aim of this study is to analyse patient factors dictating the decision in opting for the type of thyroidectomy incision and the importance of the surgical scar.

Methodology: This cross-sectional qualitative study was conducted on 2 groups of patients. The 1st group included patients who underwent thyroid surgery. The 2nd group included patients on follow-up for thyroid nodules who may require thyroidectomy in the future. Questionnaires and semi-structured interviews were administered in an outpatient setting in a tertiary healthcare institution. The responses were transcribed and coded into recurring themes.

Result: 17 surgery-naïve patients (2 males, 15 females) and 13 post-thyroidectomy patients (2 males, 11 females) participated in semi-structured interviews. In the surgery-naïve group, 11 (64.7%) opted for open thyroidectomy, 4 (23.5%) opted for trans-axillary thyroidectomy and 2 (11.8%) opted for trans-oral thyroidectomy. In the post-thyroidectomy group, 5 (38.4%) opted for open thyroidectomy, 4 (30.8%) opted for trans-axillary thyroidectomy and 4 (30.8%) opted for trans-oral thyroidectomy. The themes that emerged from both groups were: 1. Patients would rather avoid the neck crease scar. (12 surgery-naïve patients and 7 post-thyroidectomy patients indicated as such) 2. Cost is a significant factor. 3. The scar matters less as patient ages. 4. The scar matters more for women. 5. Patients voiced reservations to the perceived complications of MIS, especially the trans-oral route.

Conclusion: Scar cosmesis and cost were crucial factors that affect decision making in thyroid surgery. This was found to be significant amongst women. Significant proportion of patients voiced pre-formed ideas that were exaggerated concerns of complications of MIS. Counselling and awareness are crucial factors in dispelling perceived MIS complications. Prospective, longitudinal studies with a larger sample size may validate the results of this study and enlighten further knowledge on this topic.