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MISSION

Through worldwide collaboration, CROES seeks to assess, using evidence based scientific methodology, the various aspects of clinical endourology.

VISION

By applying rigorous scientific evaluation to the field of clinical endourology, CROES will enable all urologic surgeons to bring to their patients the most effective and efficient care possible.

PROJECTS

- Global PCNL study
- Global URS study
- Global GreenLight Laser study
- Global Renal Mass study
- Global NBI study

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CROES SURVEY-BASED STUDIES: THE ROLE OF EXPERT OPINION IN ENDOUROLOGIC RESEARCH

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Background

The Clinical Research Office of the Endourological Society (CROES) facilitates global research on various aspects of endourology. Some of the recent global prospective studies include the Global Percutaneous Nephrolithotomy (PCNL) Study, Global Greenlight Laser Study, Global Renal Mass Study, and the Global Ureterorenoscopy Study. In addition to these studies, the CROES office is currently running a randomized control study comparing white light cystoscopy and narrow band imaging (NBI) cystoscopy in the management of nonmuscle-invasive bladder carcinoma.

Apart from the quantitative studies, the CROES office performs qualitative studies using surveys. The surveys are intended to explore opinions, attitudes, and global differences in the practice of endourology. Given the large network of members of the Endourological Society, CROES surveys have a wide global reach.

Steps in the development and implementation of a survey-based study

Surveys conducted by the CROES office are either initiated by individual members of the Endourological Society or by the CROES office itself. The investigators submit a request and intention to perform a survey-based study. The request is reviewed by the CROES office and may subsequently be approved. Thereafter, investigators develop the survey questions and response options in detail. The survey is then converted to the digital survey platform and is hosted online. Individual members of the Endourological Society are invited to participate in the survey. Investigators are reminded several times in a period of 3 to 4 weeks to complete the survey. Participation in the CROES surveys is voluntary. At the closure of the survey, all data are collected and analyzed either independently or in combination with quantitative data from the large databases of the CROES studies.

Participation and response to CROES surveys

The CROES surveys achieve remarkably high response rates; for example, a response rate of 75.5% was achieved in the CROES survey for the validation of the Clavien score system for PCNL.¹ A survey on current practices in the management of urolithiasis had a response rate of 80%. The high response rates are a testament to the commitment of endourologists to support the work of the CROES office and to advance the quality of urologic science by sharing their expert opinions. Nevertheless, the participation of urologists is disproportionately higher from academic urology centers compared with urologists based in the community and private urologic centers. We therefore encourage community-based urologists to participate more often in the CROES surveys not only to expand the representativeness of the survey findings but also to promote the sharing of beliefs and experience accrued from community and private practice. In any case, a large proportion of urologic care takes place in the community and private centers.

Quality of surveys

Although CROES surveys are voluntary, the CROES office has managed to achieve an excellent global representation of urologists. Participating urologists are requested to provide high quality data. Indeed, we have been able to achieve very good consistency in a survey from endourologists that was repeated after 6 months. In another recent survey-based study, we used expert opinion to evaluate the reliability and validity of the Clavien classification. Urologists were asked to score postoperative complications of PCNL using the Clavien score system.² We observed consistency between the findings of the survey and data collected in the CROES PCNL database.¹ The responses of experts were finally consolidated to specify categories of Clavien scores for postoperative complications of PCNL.

Value of surveys

Cross-sectional surveys are a cheap and powerful research method of eliciting knowledge about contemporary clinical practice. Surveys provide a simple and straightforward approach to measure the attitude, skills, and beliefs of urologists that are seldom captured by quantitative research methods. They thus supplement quantitative studies.

Surveys, nevertheless, have their pitfalls. Individual respondents may give responses that are consistent to what they believe and not necessarily what they practice. For example, in a survey of stone management techniques, urologists may report the recommendations of the guidelines instead of the actual practice when asked about their preferred method for management of stone disease. Surveys are also vulnerable to recall bias. Proper design of questions is thus important to ensure that the survey captures the intended research question.

Conclusion

We thank endourologists who have participated in previous survey-based studies from the CROES office and encourage more urologists, especially in community and private settings to contribute. After all, collective knowledge, attitudes, and opinions when shared not only improve the quality of care that we offer our patients but also strengthen the profession of urology.

References

1. de la Rosette JJ, Opondo D, Daels FP, et al. Categorisation of complications and validation of the Clavien score for percutaneous nephrolithotomy. *Eur Urol* 2012;62:246–255.
2. Dindo D, Demartines N, Clavien PA. Classification of surgical complications: A new proposal with evaluation in a cohort of 6336 patients and results of a survey. *Ann Surg* 2004;205–213.

- The global PCNL observational study was closed in December 2009.
- The Global Ureterscopy study and the Gloal Renal Mass Study were closed in January 2012. Data collection is still ongoing in a selected number of centers.
- The Global Greenlight Laser study was closed in April 2012.
- Ongoing project: The randomized study on Narrow Band Imaging *vs* White Light Imaging.
- For further information please visit: www.croesoffice.org or contact the executive director of CROES, Mrs. Sonja van Rees Vellinga (info@croesoffice.org).