

Enhanced recovery after gynecologic surgery

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VALORIZATION

This chapter discusses the valorization potential of the research presented in this thesis. The relevance and implications on professional, societal, and economic perspective were already addressed in the introduction and discussion in this thesis and throughout the individual chapters. In this paragraph we will shortly summarize the implications of the main findings. The challenge of the implementation of the best available evidence in daily practice, with a focus on perioperative care after gynecologic surgery in the Netherlands, is the focus of this thesis.

Since the first successful report of a multimodal program for colorectal surgery by Kehlet in 1997, the use of perioperative care programs has increased significantly worldwide. In 2001, the ERAS Society was initiated by a group of early adopters in Europe to enhance recovery and reduce complications after surgery. The multidisciplinary and multimodal approach was based on existing evidence and includes all available elements of care that improve recovery. Structured implementation (compliance of 70% or more) results in a reduction in hospital stay, a reduction in postoperative complications, and a reduction in overall health care costs. So, the concept of ERAS could be considered as an important example of value-based care. The collaborative promoted the development and spread of perioperative care protocols, but also focused on education and implementation of best practices. The Netherlands was one of these early adopters. ERAS was implemented successfully in colorectal surgery, between 2005 and 2009, by using a Breakthrough Series model in 33 Dutch hospitals. Our review showed that the multimodal elements could be applied to gynecologic surgery as well, with similar positive results. The nationwide implementation of ERAS in gynecologic surgery was evaluated in this thesis. Implementation of ERAS contributes to the standardization of perioperative practice, which is essential to improve health care. However, still variation exists in perioperative care elements between different hospitals. The (prolonged) use of thrombosis prophylaxis and different pain treatment strategies are, for example, elements with a lack of consistent evidence and consensus. Audit of process measures and patient outcomes are necessary to reveal those differences in clinical care. Besides fundamental research generating improved medical knowledge, health care research generating insight into clinical practice variation is necessary to compare and spread best practices in health care.

The concept of valorization is based on the underlying value of knowledge. Structured implementation of this knowledge in daily practice is essential. The implementation of quality improvement initiatives on large scale proved to be challenging and research on how to optimize resources is warranted. Although this thesis was focused on an innovation in gynecologic surgery, results about the presented

implementation challenges are relevant for a broader audience. The results were published in peer reviewed international journals and were presented at national and international scientific conferences. During the research project, we had a nationwide focus and multidisciplinary health care professionals were involved. The patient association for gynecologic cancer (OLIJF) and the national collaborative of professionals involved in the treatment of women with gynecologic cancer (DGOG) were contacted before the start of the implementation project. The DGOG supported the underlying aim to reach nationwide standardization of perioperative care consistent with the ERAS program. This stimulated awareness at professional, hospital, and patient level. As part of the implementation process actual care was measured, evaluated, and improved. Although these results are promising, still progress can be made to refine the findings described in this thesis, and to stimulate the development of more efficient and sustainable large-scale implementation programs in the future.