

Treatment of Achalasia in the Evidence-Based Medicine Era – A Quest in Search for a Proper Attitude by Reviewing the Present Guidelines

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Abstract

The best way to start a paper like this is with a citation from W. Edwards Deming: “Without data, you’re just another person with an opinion.” In the era of Evidence-Based Medicine (EBM) every surgical procedure has to be backed up by solid statistical data to offer our patients the best treatment. But is EBM always the path to truth? We decided to analyze the literature for achalasia and see if the guidelines and the data are reliable enough to justify a certain attitude. Practically, we engaged in this endeavor not because we do not trust the statements of the guidelines, but to see if a surgeon can find by themselves the proper attitude in this disease. Achalasia is a motility disorder of the esophagus characterized by deficient relaxation of the inferior esophageal sphincter that results in dysphagia. There are several methods of treatment, with various statements in the guidelines. Currently, every treatment should be sustained by data and statistics, evidence-based medicine being mandatory when a method is preferred over another. This article reviews several studies and also the available guidelines in search for an answer to the question which procedure is the best.

Key words: achalasia, treatment, evidence-based medicine, guidelines