



Reply

Reply letter to: A letter to the editor on “Anterior perineal plane for ultra-low anterior resection of the rectum (APPEAR) technique: A systematic review”


We would like to thank the authors of this letter for their interest in our paper.

We agree completely that anatomical definitions are very important in the evaluation of surgical methods however our paper is a systematic review of outcomes, not a description of the APPEAR technique. As referenced within our paper, we would direct the authors to the earlier paper from Williams et al. [1], which contains a detailed description of the APPEAR technique, including illustrations.

Professor Williams described the rectal ‘no man's land’ as the area of the distal rectum within the pelvic floor musculature [2]. At the time that this article was written, transanal techniques were not widely used and the alternative to a low anterior resection was an APER. The term ‘no man's land’ was used to describe the part of the rectum, which is difficult to access with an abdominal approach, within and below the pelvic floor. The ischioanal fossa itself was not considered to be the rectal ‘no man's land’ but this distal part of the rectum can be accessed via the ischioanal fossa.

Over recent years there has been rapid uptake and evolution of transanal techniques [3], these have arisen mainly as a result of difficulties accessing the lower rectum via an abdominal approach. Perineal approaches are an important tool, amongst many, that are required for complex rectal surgery; all of these techniques continue to evolve. The long-term functional and oncological outcomes following perineal and transanal surgery are not yet established and these remain an important area of research for us.

Ethical approval

Not required for a letter.

Sources of funding

No sources of funding to declare other than above.

Author contribution

Kathryn Lynes – writing.
Norman S Williams – final approval.
Christopher L Chan – final approval.
Mohamed A Thaha – final approval.

Conflicts of interest

Kathryn Lynes – no conflict of interest to declare.

Norman S Williams is a consultant to Frankenman International who have a licensing agreement with QMUL, his employer, to manufacture stapling instrumentation for surgical procedures. He has also received an educational research grant and travel and subsistence support to attend medical conferences from the same company.

Christopher L Chan – no conflict of interest to declare.

Mohamed A Thaha – has received an educational research grant and travel and subsistence support to attend medical conference from Frankenman International.

Research registration number

Not required for a letter.

Guarantor

Kathryn Lynes.

Provenance and peer review

Not Commissioned, internally reviewed.

Data statement

As this is a letter, there is no applicable data.

References

- [1] N.S. Williams, J. Murphy, C.H. Knowles, Anterior perineal plan for ultra-low anterior resection of the rectum the APPEAR technique: a prospective clinical trial of a new procedure, *Ann. Surg.* 247 (2008) 750–758.
- [2] N.S. Williams, The rectal ‘no man's land’ and sphincter preservation during rectal excision, *Br. J. Surg.* 97 (2010) 1749–1751.
- [3] S.H. Emile, F.B. de Lacy, D.S. Keller, B. Martin-Perez, S. Alrawi, A.M. Lacy, M. Chand, Evolution of transanal total mesorectal excision for rectal cancer: from top to bottom, *World J. Gastrointest. Surg.* 10 (2018) 28–39.

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