absence of an air leak. In our series we perfomed early removal of chest drainage (1 h after VATS-LB) in 92.4% (135 out of 146 patients) with a complication rate of hemothorax or pneumothorax of 3.4%.

Chang and coworkers reported a series of 62 ambulatory patients undergoing outpatient thoracoscopic lung biopsy with early chest tube removal [14]. A total of 72.5% were discharged home within 8 h of observation on the day of operation, 22.5% were discharged within 23 h of their operation and 5% required admission for prolonged air-leak or conversion to muscle-sparing thoracotomy; one patient who underwent lung biopsy was readmitted for pneumothorax. They concluded that early chest tube removal and outpatient thoracoscopic lung biopsy were safe and effective. In our published series of day-case thoracic surgery, starting from 2001, most patients to whom lung biopsy was performed were discharged within 1 h after VATS-LB and only one patient required admission due to air-leak observed before chest tube withdrawal [15].

To our knowledge this is the largest series to date (146 patients) of early chest tube removal after VATS-LB and according to our results we believe that in the absence of postoperative air leak, early chest tube removal after VATS-LB appears to be safe, reduces hospital stay and allows an outpatient procedure in selected cases.

References


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eComment: I think that fast-track protocols after lung surgery [1] should also help for diagnosis. For patients with suspected interstitial lung disease, I always ask the doctor who refers the patient how many and from which part of the lung the biopsy(ies) should be taken. Small sized, periferic and random biopsies usually do not bring anything new other than the ‘honeycomb pattern’. If someone’s aim is to perform the biopsy with short chest tube time only, he or she can better use silicon, multi-hole, soft drains with negative suction. They are easy to pull out and the patient can be sent home with the drainage and come back for a control the day after if a problem occurs.

References