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Journal of Orthopedic & Muscular System: Current Research

Commentry Article

Surgical Outcomes of Laminectomy in Lumbar Spinal Canal Stenosis

Sophie Keller*

Center for Spinal Disorders, Zurich University Hospital, Zurich, Switzerland

DESCRIPTION

Laminectomy remains one of the most widely performed surgical procedures for the management of lumbar spinal canal stenosis, a condition characterized by progressive narrowing of the spinal canal leading to compression of neural structures. In my opinion, despite the emergence of minimally invasive alternatives, laminectomy continues to hold a central position in spinal surgery due to its reliability in decompressing neural elements and improving functional outcomes in appropriately selected patients. The surgical outcomes of this procedure are influenced by multiple factors, including patient selection, severity of stenosis, presence of comorbidities, and the surgical technique employed.

The primary objective of laminectomy in lumbar spinal canal stenosis is to relieve pressure on the spinal cord and nerve roots by removing the lamina and associated compressive structures. This decompression often results in significant reduction of symptoms such as neurogenic claudication, lower limb pain, and sensory disturbances. In many patients, particularly those with moderate to severe stenosis, surgical intervention provides better long-term relief compared to conservative treatment alone. In my view, the effectiveness of laminectomy lies in its ability to directly address the anatomical cause of neural compression, thereby offering a definitive solution rather than symptomatic relief.

Functional outcomes following laminectomy are generally favorable, with many patients experiencing improved walking distance, reduced pain intensity, and enhanced quality of life. However, the degree of improvement varies depending on the duration and severity of preoperative symptoms. Patients with long-standing nerve compression may experience less complete neurological recovery due to irreversible nerve damage. This highlights the importance of timely surgical intervention before chronic compression leads to permanent deficits. Early referral and accurate diagnosis are therefore critical in optimizing postoperative outcomes.

Another important factor influencing surgical success is the extent of decompression achieved during the procedure. Adequate removal of compressive structures is essential for symptom relief, but excessive bone removal may lead to postoperative spinal instability. In some cases, instability may necessitate additional fusion procedures to maintain spinal alignment and prevent long-term mechanical complications. In my opinion, achieving the correct balance between sufficient decompression and preservation of structural stability remains one of the key challenges in laminectomy surgery.

Minimally invasive approaches to laminectomy have gained increasing popularity in recent years due to their potential to reduce tissue trauma, blood loss, and postoperative pain. These techniques utilize smaller incisions and specialized instruments to achieve decompression while preserving surrounding musculature and ligaments. Early clinical outcomes suggest that minimally invasive laminectomy may offer faster recovery and shorter hospital stays compared to traditional open techniques, although long-term results appear to be comparable in appropriately selected cases. The choice between open and minimally invasive approaches often depends on surgeon expertise, anatomical considerations, and available resources.

Postoperative rehabilitation plays a crucial role in determining long-term outcomes after laminectomy. Early mobilization, physiotherapy, and structured rehabilitation programs contribute to improved functional recovery and reduced risk of complications such as deep vein thrombosis and muscle deconditioning. Patient education regarding posture, activity modification, and spinal care is equally important in preventing recurrence of symptoms and ensuring sustained improvement. In my view, surgical intervention alone is insufficient without a comprehensive rehabilitation strategy.

Despite generally positive outcomes, laminectomy is associated with certain risks and complications. These may include dural tears, infection, epidural hematoma, and postoperative instability. Careful surgical technique and adherence to perioperative protocols can significantly reduce the incidence of these complications. Additionally, patient-related factors such as obesity, diabetes mellitus, and smoking status may negatively influence healing and overall outcomes. Therefore, preoperative optimization of health status is an essential component of surgical planning.

Correspondence to: Sophie Keller. Center for Spinal Disorders, Zurich University Hospital, Zurich, Switzerland, E-mail: sophie.keller@usz.ch

Received: 01-Sep-2025, Manuscript No. OMCR-25-43651; **Editor assigned:** 04-Sep-2025, PreQC No. OMCR-25-43651 (PQ); **Reviewed:** 18-Sep-2025, QC No. OMCR-25-43651; **Revised:** 25-Sep-2025, Manuscript No. OMCR-25-43651 (R); **Published:** 29-Sep-2025, DOI: 10.35248/2161-0533.25.14.433.

Citation: Keller S (2025) Surgical Outcomes of Laminectomy in Lumbar Spinal Canal Stenosis. J Orthop Muscular Syst. 14.433.

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Long-term outcomes of laminectomy in lumbar spinal canal stenosis are generally satisfactory, with many patients maintaining symptom relief for several years. However, some individuals may experience recurrent symptoms due to disease progression, scar tissue formation, or adjacent segment degeneration. Regular follow-up and imaging evaluation may be necessary in patients with persistent or recurrent complaints. In my opinion, long-term success depends not only on surgical technique but also on continuous patient monitoring and lifestyle modifications.