



Video-Based Performance Analysis in Pituitary Surgery—Part 1: Surgical Outcomes

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■ **BACKGROUND:** Endoscopic pituitary adenoma surgery has a steep learning curve, with varying surgical techniques and outcomes across centers. In other surgeries, superior performance is linked with superior surgical outcomes. This study aimed to explore the prediction of patient-specific outcomes using surgical video analysis in pituitary surgery.

■ **METHODS:** Endoscopic pituitary adenoma surgery videos from a single center were annotated by experts for operative workflow (3 surgical phases and 15 surgical steps) and operative skill (using modified Objective Structured Assessment of Technical Skills [mOSATS]). Quantitative workflow metrics were calculated, including phase duration and step transitions. Poisson or logistic regression was used to assess the association of workflow metrics and mOSATS with common inpatient surgical outcomes.

■ **RESULTS:** 100 videos from 100 patients were included. Nasal phase mean duration was 24 minutes and mean mOSATS was 21.2/30. Mean duration was 34 minutes and mean mOSATS was 20.9/30 for the sellar phase, and 11 minutes and 21.7/30, respectively, for the closure phase. The most common adverse outcomes were new anterior pituitary hormone deficiency (n = 26), dysnatremia (n = 24), and cerebrospinal fluid leak (n = 5). Higher mOSATS for all 3

phases and shorter operation duration were associated with decreased length of stay ($P = 0.003$ & $P < 0.001$). Superior closure phase mOSATS were associated with reduced postoperative cerebrospinal fluid leak ($P < 0.001$), and superior sellar phase mOSATS were associated with reduced postoperative visual deterioration ($P = 0.041$).

■ **CONCLUSIONS:** Superior surgical skill and shorter surgical time were associated with superior surgical outcomes, at a generic and phase-specific level. Such video-based analysis has promise for integration into data-driven training and service improvement initiatives.

INTRODUCTION

Pituitary adenomas are among the most common intracranial tumors, with an estimated prevalence of up to 20%.^{1,2} They are slow-growing tumors that may present incidentally through mass effect (e.g. visual decline) or hormone imbalance (e.g. Cushing's disease), therefore potentially causing significant morbidity, quality of life reduction, and death if left untreated.^{1,3}

The gold standard treatment for most patients with symptomatic pituitary adenoma is transsphenoidal surgical excision, with the endoscopic transsphenoidal approach (eTSA) improving surgical access and visualization when compared with microscopic

Key words

- Outcomes
- Performance
- Pituitary adenoma
- Prediction
- Transsphenoidal

Abbreviations and Acronyms

CSF: Cerebrospinal fluid

eTSA: Endoscopic transsphenoidal approach

mOSATS: Modified Objective Structured Assessment of Technical Skills

OSATS: Objective Structured Assessment of Technical Skills

SIADH: Syndrome of inappropriate antidiuretic hormone

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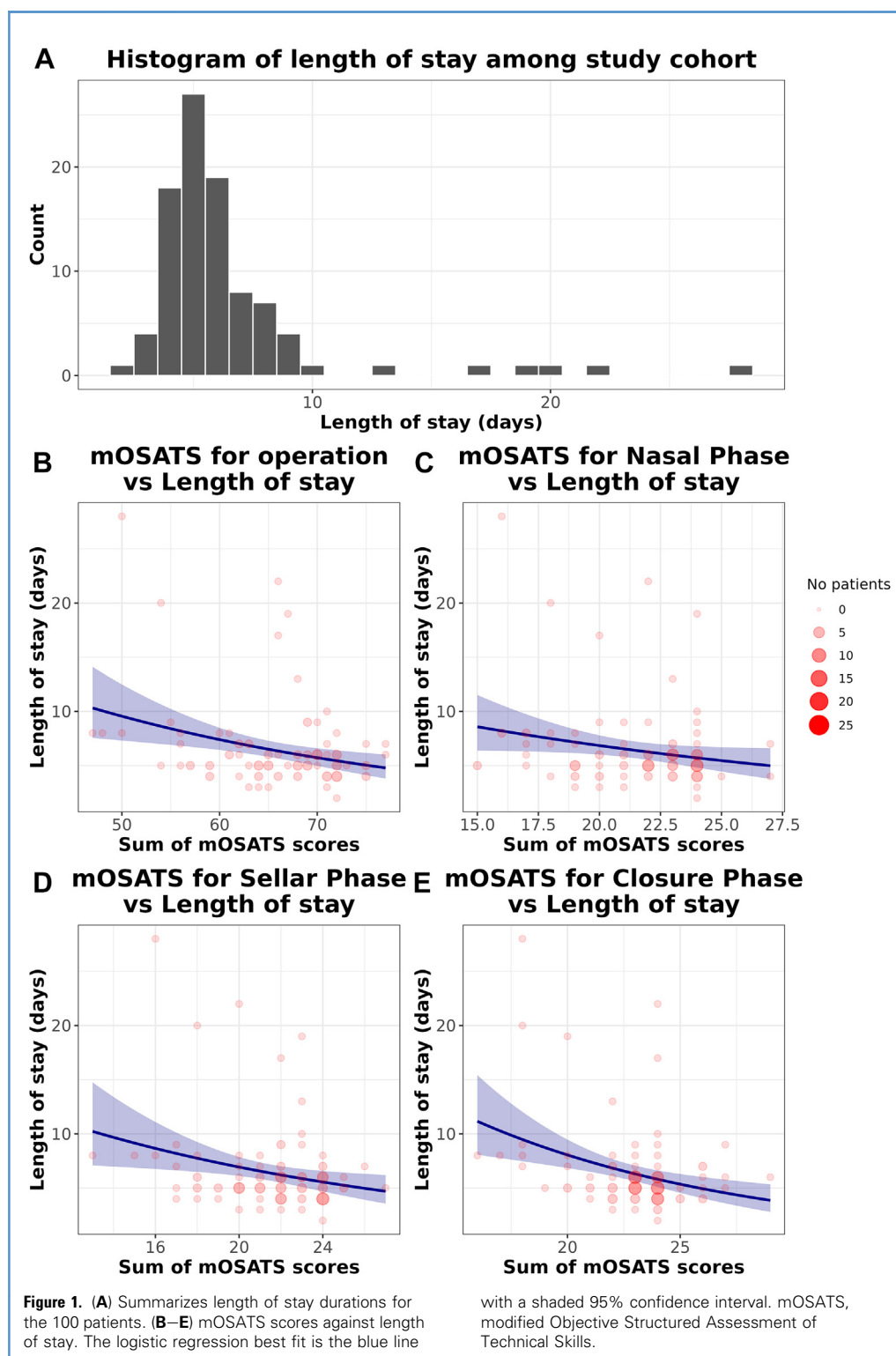
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approaches.^{1,2} However, postoperative outcomes (e.g. dysnatremia) are challenging to predict after pituitary surgery, with patients often requiring days of monitoring postoperatively

prior to safe discharge.⁴ This inherently limits service improvement initiatives such as early discharge protocols or prophylactic treatment of common complications, for example,



prophylactic fluid restriction for those at high risk of syndrome of inappropriate antidiuretic hormone (SIADH).⁵

Patient and tumor-related factors likely affect such outcomes, for example, patient age, or tumor size and invasiveness.⁶ While surgical performance has been shown to influence surgical outcomes in many procedures,⁷ this has not been explored for eTSA. There is also significant variation in how the eTSA is performed, largely based on surgeon preference, and the impact of this on outcomes is unclear.^{3,8-13} This variation contributes toward the challenge of auditing performance and predicting outcomes. To address this, we generated an international, consensus-driven analysis of the operative workflow (phases, steps, instruments, and errors) in contemporary pituitary surgery (**Figure 1**).¹³ This workflow analysis is used to systematically segment operations into their subcomponents, which can then be assessed for their effectiveness and safety. Practically, this can be performed through the segmentation of operative videos, allowing a granular and structured analysis of surgical performance.¹⁴⁻¹⁸ Similarly, operative skill can be assessed via video analysis using validated scales such as the Objective Structured Assessment of Technical Skills (OSATS), which we have modified and validated specifically for pituitary surgery (mOSATS).¹⁶

Linking this video-based workflow and skill analysis to the wider clinical context has the potential to allow data-driven postoperative outcome prediction based on surgical performance. In the future, this could be used to provide clinicians with postoperative decision support, identifying patients at low risk for complications who may be discharged early or those at high risk who would benefit from further monitoring or even prophylactic treatment. Furthermore, this video-based performance analysis could be automated using artificial intelligence and therefore integrated into surgical training programs to regularly evaluate and improve operative skill.

As a first step, we sought to explore the potential for surgical video performance analysis in predicting patient-specific outcomes after pituitary surgery.

METHODS

Study Overview

A retrospective analysis of prospectively collected operative video data and surgical outcome data was performed at a single tertiary neurosurgical center—the National Hospital for Neurology & Neurosurgery, Queen Square, London, United Kingdom. Ethical

approval was granted for the project via the regional ethics committee of South West - Frenchay Research Ethics Committee, and informed written patient consent was obtained.

Data Collection and Curation

All endoscopic pituitary surgeries performed at our center are recorded and uploaded after patient consent to the Touch Surgery Enterprise platform (Medtronic, Dublin, Ireland), a combined software and hardware solution for securely recording, storing, and analyzing surgical videos. 100 consecutive videos of the eTSA for pituitary adenomas were selected from this library between August 16, 2018, and June 09, 2022. Incomplete videos or recent revision surgeries (within 6 months) were excluded. All videos were annotated for the surgical steps and phases present (**Table 1**), guided by a standardized annotation framework which was derived from a preceding international consensus study on pituitary surgery workflow.^{13,14,19} Annotation was performed collaboratively by 2 neurosurgical residents with operative pituitary experience and then verified by an attending neurosurgeon. These step and phase annotations were used to calculate quantitative workflow metrics—individual step length, individual phase length, total number of step transitions, and total number of phase transitions. A transition was defined as when one step (or phase) changes to a different step (or phase).

All videos were then annotated for surgical performance using a bespoke mOSATS scale by 3 independent attending neurosurgeons based at external centers.²⁰ mOSATS scores were calculated for each of the 3 surgical phases (nasal, sellar, closure), with the 6 subdomains combined to give a total score for each phase (maximum score of 30 per phase) (**Supplementary Material 1**). For each video, the associated clinical data were extracted from a prospectively maintained database, with metrics derived from previous multicenter studies on pituitary surgery outcomes.^{12,21} This included demographics (age, sex), tumor factors (size, subtype), and common inpatient outcomes—including length of stay, hyponatremia, SIADH, hypernatremia, diabetes insipidus (transient or persistent), cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) leak (biochemically confirmed and/or requiring operative intervention), postoperative visual deterioration, new suspected anterior pituitary hormone deficit requiring hydrocortisone supplementation on discharge (started if day 2 cortisol <350 nmol/L, except for patients with Cushing's), and new suspected posterior pituitary hormone deficit requiring desmopressin supplementation on discharge.

Table 1. Surgical Phases and Constituent Steps Labeled in the Surgical Videos if Present

Phases	Nasal	Sellar	Closure
Steps	1. Lateral displacement of middle and superior turbinates 2. Identification of sphenoid ostium and anterior sphenoidotomy 3. Lateral displacement of septum 4. Naso-sphenoid corridor creation 5. Identification of sella limits and neurovascular landmarks	6. Sellotomy 7. Durotomy 8. Tumor excision	9. Hemostasis 10. Spongostan placement 11. Fat graft placement 12. Rigid buttress placement 13. Fascia placement 14. Tissue glue application 15. Nasal packing

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were generated for the workflow, mOSATS and clinical data using Excel (v16.8, Microsoft). Workflow metrics and mOSATS were paired with particular outcomes on a phase level. Sellar phase mOSATS and workflow metrics were compared against outcomes that were felt to be relevant to that phase (hypernatremia, hyponatremia, new visual loss, new anterior or posterior pituitary hormonal deficit requiring hydrocortisone or desmopressin supplementation, respectively). Closure phase mOSATS and workflow metrics were compared against CSF leak rates. Nasal phase mOSATS and workflow metrics were compared against the length of stay only, as no outcomes in our dataset were felt to align logically with this phase.

Statistical analysis was conducted using R statistical programming,²² with packages *dplyr*²³ and *tidyr*²⁴ for data preparation, and *ggplot2*²⁵ and *patchwork*²⁶ for data visualization. Continuous outcomes were analyzed with Poisson regression, and binary outcomes with logistic regression. Any “U”-shaped curves (or its inverse) were investigated by using a quadratic transformation of the data, with the peak/trough set to be the median of the data. The best fitting model for each outcome and metric combination was selected by using the Akaike Information Criterion.²⁷

RESULTS

Overview

Data from 100 patients were included in this study. The median age of the sample was 53 years (interquartile range: 41–69) and the majority were male ($n = 59$). Most tumors were macroadenomas ($n = 94$), and the most common clinical phenotype was nonfunctioning adenoma ($n = 71$), followed by acromegaly ($n = 16$), prolactinoma ($n = 7$), and Cushing’s disease ($n = 6$). The median length of stay was 5 days (IQR: 5–7 days; [Figure 1](#)), and the rest of the postoperative outcomes are displayed in [Table 2](#). Of note, 7 of the 10 cases of diabetes insipidus were transient, and 1 displayed a

triphasic response—developing SIADH. All 5 cases of CSF leaks required operative intervention (CSF diversion or skull base repair). Of the 2 patients with postoperative visual deterioration, one was due to a hematoma which needed surgical evacuation, while the other case was of presumed ischemic etiology.

Skill versus Outcomes

The mean overall mOSATS score across all 3 operative phases was 63.9 (standard deviation [SD]: 5.3), out of an available score of 90. For the nasal phase, the mean mOSATS score was 21.2 (SD: 1.9), out of an available score of 30. The mean score was lowest for the sellar phase at 20.9 (SD: 2.1) and highest for the closure phase at 21.7 (SD: 2.2). An example of high and low mOSATS scoring performances can be found in [Supplementary Material 3](#).

When compared against postoperative outcomes, the mOSATS score for all 3 phases was significantly associated with decreased length of stay ([Table 3](#), [Figure 1](#)). Additionally, a superior closure phase mOSATS score was significantly associated with a reduction in postoperative CSF leak incidence, and a superior sellar phase mOSATS was associated with a reduction in postoperative visual deterioration ([Table 3](#), [Figure 2](#)).

Workflow Metrics versus Outcomes

The median phase duration was 24 minutes (IQR: 14–30 minutes) for the nasal phase, 34 minutes (IQR: 26–43 minutes) for the sellar phase, and 11 minutes (IQR: 7–19 minutes) for the closure phase. The longest surgical step was tumor excision (median 10 minutes, IQR 5–15 minutes), followed by sellotomy (median 5 minutes, IQR 3–9 minutes) and rigid buttress placement when present (median 4 minutes, IQR 3–7 minutes). The median number of step transitions per phase was 11 (IQR: 7–14) for nasal, 7 (IQR: 4–11) for sellar, and 6 (IQR: 3–8) for closure.

A shorter operation duration was significantly associated with a reduced length of stay, as was a shorter nasal phase duration ([Table 3](#), [Figures 3](#) and [4](#)). No other significant relationships were found at the phase level ([Table 3](#), [Supplementary Material 2](#)). When comparing surgical steps against relevant outcomes, no statistically or clinically significant linear relationship was detected ([Supplementary Material 2](#)).

DISCUSSION

Principal Findings

To our knowledge, this is the first study leveraging surgical video analysis of performance and workflow to predict outcomes in pituitary surgery.

We found that superior general operative performance (measured via mOSATS, across all 3 surgical phases) was linked with better overall outcomes, such as decreased postoperative length of stay. Similarly, when considering surgical workflow, progression through all surgical steps in a shorter time was significantly associated with a decreased length of postoperative stay. Furthermore, superior performance in specific surgical phases was related to clinically related outcomes. For example, superior closure phase skill was linked with reduced postoperative CSF leak rates—an outcome specific to this operative phase, and one of the most common complications of endoscopic pituitary surgery. Similarly, superior sellar phase skill (which includes

Table 2. Summary of Postoperative Outcomes

Outcome	Number of Patients
Hyponatremia	13 (13%)
SIADH	11 (11%)
Hypernatremia	11 (11%)
Diabetes insipidus	10 (10%)
Cerebrospinal fluid leak	5 (5%)
Postoperative visual deterioration	4 (4%)
New anterior pituitary hormone deficit requiring hydrocortisone supplementation	26 (26%)
New posterior pituitary hormone deficit requiring desmopressin supplementation	3 (3%)
Seven of the 10 cases of diabetes insipidus were transient, and one displayed a triphasic response - developing SIADH.	
SIADH, syndrome of inappropriate antidiuretic hormone.	

Table 3. Logistic Regression of Operative Skill and Workflow Metrics per Phase Against Outcomes

Phase	Domain	Outcome	P Value
Whole operation	Skill (mOSATS)	Length of stay§	0.003
	Duration	Length of stay†	<0.001
	No. of phase transitions	Length of stay‡	0.171
Nasal phase	Skill (mOSATS)	Length of stay§	0.044
	Duration	Length of stay‡	0.037
	No. of step transitions	Length of stay‡	0.063
Sellar phase	Skill (mOSATS)	Length of stay§	0.013
		Hypernatremia§	0.349
		Hyponatremia§	0.367
		Dysnatremia§	0.323
		Postoperative visual loss§	0.041
		New anterior pituitary hormonal deficit§	0.322
		New posterior pituitary hormonal deficit§	0.415
	Duration	Length of stay†	1.017
		Hypernatremia¶	0.638
		Hyponatremia¶	0.468
		Dysnatremia¶	0.511
		Postoperative visual loss¶	0.343
		New anterior pituitary hormonal deficit	0.398
		New posterior pituitary hormonal deficit	0.397
	No. of step transitions	Length of stay*	0.191
		Hypernatremia¶	0.243
		Hyponatremia	0.533
		Dysnatremia¶	0.222
		Postoperative visual loss¶	0.282
		New anterior pituitary hormonal deficit	0.293
		New posterior pituitary hormonal deficit	0.996
Closure phase	Skill (mOSATS)	Length of stay§	<0.001
		Cerebrospinal fluid leak§	0.025
	Duration	Length of stay	0.056
		Cerebrospinal fluid leak	0.172
	No. of step transitions	Length of stay¶	0.419
		Cerebrospinal fluid leak¶	0.100

Dysnatremia is the sum of hypernatremia and hyponatremia. For each combination, best-fit models were selected. *P*-values surpassing the threshold of statistical significance are bolded. mOSATS, modified Objective Structured Assessment of Technical Skills.

*Represents Poisson regression.

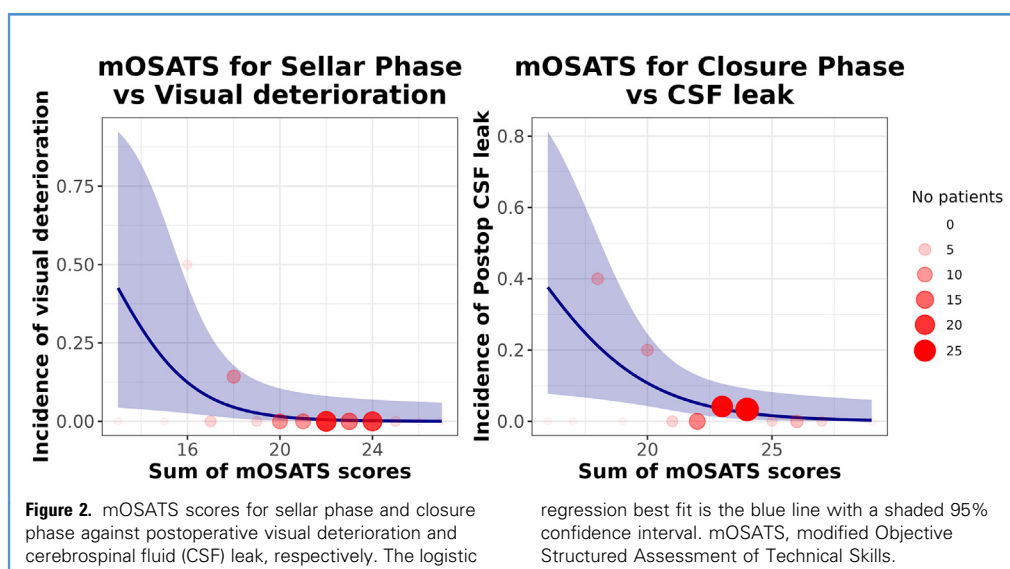
†Represents quadratic then Poisson regression.

‡Represents quadratic on log(x) then Poisson regression.

§Represents logistic regression.

||Represents quadratic then logistic regression.

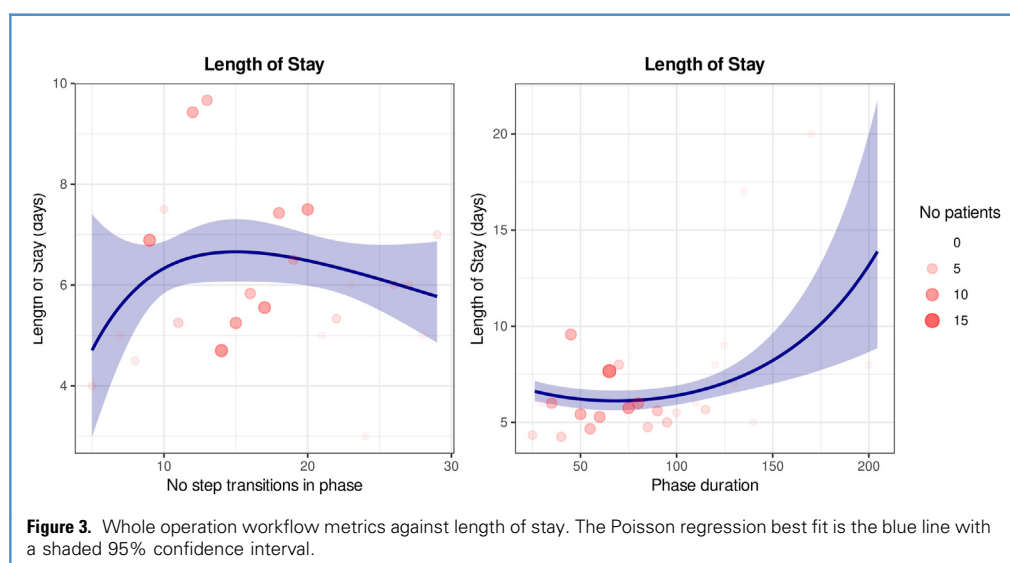
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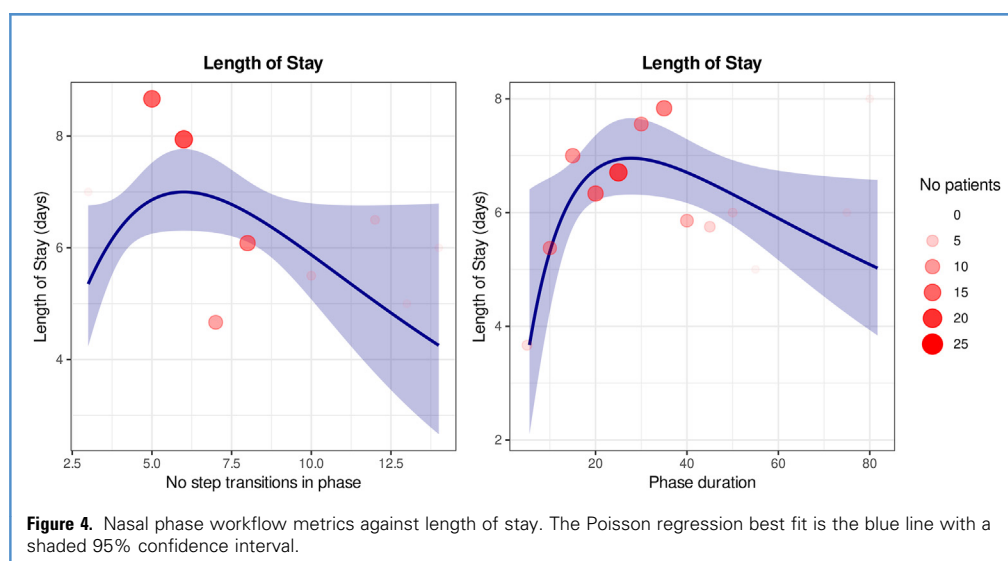


tumor resection) was associated with reduced postoperative visual deterioration.

Despite the above relationships between operative skill and outcomes, workflow metrics at a more granular step level (for example, step length or step frequency) were not associated with specific outcomes. The utility of workflow metric analysis may be clearer in multicenter studies, with larger variations in operative performance.²⁸ Alternatively, analyzing workflow metrics that are even more granular, that is “actions” and “gestures,” may uncover relationships between performance and outcomes which are not evident on a “phase” or “step” level, and may be more closely aligned with surgical skill.²⁸⁻³⁰

This video-based performance analysis sets the foundation for numerous avenues of clinical translation, with the ultimate goal of improving patient outcomes. Firstly, with regard to training, these quantitative metrics (e.g. workflow or skill assessment) can be presented to residents to help direct educational needs and supplement qualitative constructive feedback as part of coaching programs—akin to those seen in professional sports.³¹ These metrics are linked with surgical outcomes, suggesting the potential clinical impact of such training interventions.^{31,32} Similarly, this novel approach to surgical performance and outcome monitoring may have utility for clinical audit and raises the question of whether we should be recording every surgical procedure.³³ However, this requires significant





technological infrastructure at present for data storage and has uncertain medicolegal implications.

For these applications, this surgical performance analysis would ideally be more automated using technology such as computer vision and machine learning. Accordingly, our group has developed artificial neural networks for workflow recognition in pituitary surgery, which will improve the real-world feasibility and scalability of video analysis applications in the future.³³

Finding in the Context of the Literature

Our findings dovetail with existing literature on the association between operative performance and generic surgical outcomes—heralded by Birkmeyer et al.'s study linking bariatric surgery video-based OSATS scores to early surgical outcomes and complications.⁷ However, this relationship between surgical skill and outcomes did not persist for longer-term bariatric surgery outcomes, where other factors (e.g. patient-related) may have a stronger influence on outcomes (e.g. BMI, medical comorbidity resolution).³⁴ Otherwise, general surgery dominates the surgical video analysis literature—with a positive association between skills and outcomes found in laparoscopic colectomy surgery (using a bespoke skill assessment tool and OSATS) and laparoscopic total mesorectal excision (using a bespoke skill assessment tool), and laparoscopic gastrectomy for cancer (using OSATS for skill assessment), but not in less technically challenging procedures such as laparoscopic sleeve gastrectomy for weight loss (using OSATS for skill assessment).^{32,35-37}

Considering pituitary surgery specifically, our previous systematic review of 193 articles exploring the modern practice of this closure phase of endoscopic pituitary surgery found absolute heterogeneity in operative techniques and resulting postoperative CSF leak rates.¹¹ Similarly, in a large multicenter observational

study, we found a significant closure phase operative technique variation and CSF leak rates, with only a handful of factors influencing CSF leak rates (revision surgery, intraoperative CSF leak and tissue glue use).^{21,38} The findings of this study suggest that operative skill is an important modifiable risk factor for CSF leak, and interventions at improving this are likely just as important as exploring the operative technique used and optimizing patient-related factors. Furthermore, our findings suggest higher operative skill during tumor resection is linked with a lower risk of postoperative visual deterioration—perhaps reflecting better optic apparatus decompression or more respect for visual structures during tumor removal. The literature suggests that visual deterioration after pituitary adenoma surgery is rare (1–2%), with the most common causes being compressive or ischemic.³⁹ Traditional risk factors include preoperative severe visual deficit, suprasellar tumor extension, and use of rigid repair materials but the influence of surgical skill certainly needs further study.^{39,40}

More generally, many factors which influence outcomes after pituitary surgery go beyond the operation itself—for example, patient-related factors (e.g. age, frailty, prior surgery, comorbidities), tumor-related factors (e.g. size, invasiveness, histological subtype), and surgeon-related factors (e.g. surgical volume).⁴¹⁻⁴⁸ Therefore, although analysis of novel data types such as surgical videos may afford us the ability to better predict outcomes that are otherwise currently difficult to predict after pituitary surgery (e.g. SIADH), the future of robust outcome prediction models will be multimodal. This multimodal analysis will integrate clinical metadata, preoperative imaging, and operative videos in order to predict outcomes more accurately at a patient level.³³ Such data-driven outcome prediction may help form part of clinical decision support tools—aiding in the identification of patients at high risk of complication (who need further monitoring or prophylactic

treatment) or those at low risk (who may be suitable for early discharge).^{49,50} However, integrating these data will require advances in data analysis techniques, such as artificial intelligence, which allows automated analysis of novel datasets (e.g. images and videos) and can handle large amounts of variables with complex nonlinear relationships.^{14,33,51} With these data science innovations and other complementary technological advances, the pituitary surgery pathway of the future may deliver more personalized and precise medicine.

Strengths and Limitations

The strengths of this work lie in the moderately sized dataset—representing the largest combined video and clinical outcome database published within endoscopic pituitary surgery thus far to our knowledge. Similarly, the data analysis was granular, and based on validated and evidence-based annotation frameworks. However, there are numerous limitations to this work. It is a single center, with workflow analysis limited to a phase and step level, and outcomes limited to early inpatient outcomes. The definition of some of these inpatient outcomes was pragmatic, in light of the heterogeneous definitions seen in the literature. For example, the recording of anterior pituitary hormone dysfunction in this study was based on a new hydrocortisone supplementation requirement on discharge. Our center's threshold for starting this is relatively low early on postoperative (based on day 2 postoperative bloods), and many of these patients will not have a long-term hydrocortisone dependence on follow-up testing. Furthermore, reported dysnatraemia in this study encompassed any sodium abnormality, even a once off postoperative derangement (which can be confounded by many other factors, e.g. perioperative fluids), in the context of close sodium monitoring in our unit. Future work therefore will be multicenter, higher volume, with more granular video analysis, more clinical context (e.g. baseline characteristic data, radiological data), and standardized longitudinal outcomes.

CONCLUSION

In this single-center study, superior surgical skill and shorter surgical time were associated with superior generic surgical outcomes in endoscopic pituitary adenoma surgery. Better phase-specific skill (e.g. closure phase) was associated with better phase-specific outcomes (e.g. CSF leak). More granular workflow metrics were not associated with a difference in outcomes. Such video-based analysis has promise for integration into training programs to potentially improve skill and therefore outcomes further. Future work will involve larger multicenter multimodal datasets, with more granular video analysis, and automation using artificial intelligence.

CRediT AUTHORSHIP CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

Danyal Z. Khan: Conceptualization, Formal analysis, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. **Chan Hee Koh:** Formal analysis, Writing – review & editing. **Adrito Das:** Formal analysis, Visualization, Writing – review & editing. **Alexandra Valetopolou:** Data curation, Writing – review & editing. **John G. Hanrahan:** Data curation, Writing – review & editing. **Hugo Layard Horsfall:** Writing – review & editing. **Stephanie E. Baldeweg:** Writing – review & editing. **Sophia Bano:** Formal analysis, Writing – review & editing. **Anouk Borg:** Conceptualization, Data curation, Writing – review & editing. **Neil L. Dorward:** Conceptualization, Data curation, Writing – review & editing. **Olatomiwa Olukoya:** Data curation, Writing – review & editing. **Danail Stoyanov:** Supervision, Writing – review & editing. **Hani J. Marcus:** Supervision, Writing – review & editing.

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Supplementary Table 1. mOSATS scoring scale

Phase and Domain	Scale
Nasal phase	
Respect for tissue	1 (poor) – 5 (perfect)
Time and motion	1 (poor) – 5 (perfect)
Instrument handling	1 (poor) – 5 (perfect)
Flow of operation	1 (poor) – 5 (perfect)
Knowledge of instruments	1 (poor) – 5 (perfect)
Knowledge of procedure	1 (poor) – 5 (perfect)
Sellar phase	
Respect for tissue	1 (poor) – 5 (perfect)
Time and motion	1 (poor) – 5 (perfect)
Instrument handling	1 (poor) – 5 (perfect)
Flow of operation	1 (poor) – 5 (perfect)
Knowledge of instruments	1 (poor) – 5 (perfect)
Knowledge of procedure	1 (poor) – 5 (perfect)
Closure phase	
Respect for tissue	1 (poor) – 5 (perfect)
Time and motion	1 (poor) – 5 (perfect)
Instrument handling	1 (poor) – 5 (perfect)
Flow of operation	1 (poor) – 5 (perfect)
Knowledge of instruments	1 (poor) – 5 (perfect)
Knowledge of procedure	1 (poor) – 5 (perfect)
mOSATS, modified Objective Structured Assessment of Technical Skills.	