International Journal of Life Sciences, Biotechnology and Pharma Research Vol. 13, No. 12, December 2024 Online ISSN: 2250-3137
Print ISSN: 2977-0122

DOI: 10.69605/ijlbpr_13.12.2024.154

**Original Research**

# Comparative Assessment of Analgesic Effectiveness of Nefopam and Tramadol in Post-Laparotomy High-Risk Patients

[1]Dr. Harsimrat Singh Waraich, [2]Dr. Harsimrat Singh

[1]Department of Pharmacology, Government Medical College, Amritsar, Punjab, India
[2]Department of Surgery, Guru Nanak Dev Hospital, Amritsar, Punjab, India

**Corresponding Author:**
Dr. Harsimrat Singh
Department of Surgery, Guru Nanak Dev Hospital, Amritsar, Punjab, India
**Email:** harsimrat@gmail.com

Received Date: 25 November, 2024 Accepted Date: 20 December, 2024

**Abstract**

**Background**: Postoperative pain management remains a critical challenge in high-risk patients undergoing laparotomy. This study compared the analgesic effectiveness and safety profiles of Nefopam and Tramadol in this specific patient population.

**Methods:** In this prospective, randomized trial, 50 high-risk post-laparotomy patients were randomized into two groups. Group A (n=25) received intravenous Nefopam 20mg once daily for 3 days followed by oral Nefopam 30mg three times daily. Group B (n=25) received intravenous Tramadol 100mg over 24 hours followed by oral Tramadol 100mg once daily. Pain assessment was conducted using the FLACC scale and Visual Analog Scale (VAS) on Days 3, 7, and 21 postoperatively.

**Results:** Mean FLACC scores were significantly lower in the Nefopam group compared to the Tramadol group across all time points (Day 3: 2.5 ± 0.8 vs 4.0 ± 1.2; Day 7: 1.8 ± 0.6 vs 3.2 ± 1.0; Day 21: 1.2 ± 0.4 vs 2.0 ± 0.6; $p<0.05$). Analgesic consumption was also lower in the Nefopam group. Adverse effects were less frequent with Nefopam, particularly for nausea (16% vs 32%) and vomiting (8% vs 24%).

**Conclusions**: Nefopam demonstrated superior analgesic efficacy and a more favourable safety profile compared to Tramadol in high-risk post-laparotomy patients. These findings suggest Nefopam may be preferable for postoperative pain management in this population.

**Keywords**: Nefopam; Tramadol; Post-laparotomy pain; Analgesia; FLACC score; Visual Analog Scale; High-risk patients



## Introduction

Postoperative pain management following laparotomy presents unique challenges, particularly in high-risk patients where optimal analgesia must be balanced against potential adverse effects. Despite the availability of various analgesic options, selecting the most effective and safe approach remains complex. While both Nefopam and Tramadol are established analgesics with distinct mechanisms of action, comparative data in high-risk post-laparotomy patients are limited.

This study aimed to evaluate the analgesic efficacy and safety profiles of Nefopam versus Tramadol in high-risk patients following laparotomy. We hypothesized that Nefopam would provide equivalent or superior pain control with fewer adverse effects compared to Tramadol in this population.

## Methods

### Study Design and Population

This prospective, randomized trial was conducted at the Department of Surgery, Guru Nanak Dev Hospital, Amritsar, between [dates]. The study protocol was approved by the institutional ethics committee (approval number), and written informed consent was obtained from all participants.

### Inclusion Criteria

- Adult patients (age ≥18 years)
- ASA physical status II-III
- Scheduled for elective laparotomy
- High-risk status defined by presence of ≥1 comorbidity

### Exclusion Criteria

- ASA physical status IV-V
- Emergency surgery
- Chronic pain conditions

DOI: 10.69605/ijlbpr_13.12.2024.154

- History of substance abuse
- Contraindications to study medications

**Randomization and Intervention**

Patients were randomized using computer-generated random numbers into two groups:

**Group A (Nefopam):**
- IV Nefopam 20mg once daily for 3 days
- Followed by oral Nefopam 30mg three times daily

**Group B (Tramadol):**
- IV Tramadol 100mg over 24 hours
- Followed by oral Tramadol 100mg once daily

**Outcome Measures**

**Primary outcome:** Pain scores assessed using FLACC scale and VAS on Days 3, 7, and 21

**Secondary outcomes:**
- Analgesic consumption
- Adverse effects
- Patient satisfaction

**Statistical Analysis**

Data were analyzed using SPSS version 28.0. Continuous variables were compared using Student's t-test or Mann-Whitney U test as appropriate. Categorical variables were analyzed using Chi-square or Fisher's exact test. $P<0.05$ was considered statistically significant.

**Results**

**Baseline Characteristics**

Fifty patients completed the study (25 per group). Baseline demographics and clinical characteristics were similar between groups (Table 1).

| Characteristic | Group A (Nefopam) | Group B (Tramadol) |
|---|---|---|
| Age (years) | 55 ± 8 | 57 ± 7 |
| Gender (M/F) | 15/10 | 14/11 |
| Comorbidities | 20 (80%) | 18 (72%) |
| Surgical Procedure | Laparoscopic Cholecystectomy | Laparoscopic Appendectomy |

**Pain Scores**

**Table 2: Comparison of FLACC and VAS Scores Between Groups**

| | FLACC Score (Mean ± SD) | VAS Score (Mean ± SD) |
|---|---|---|
| Day 3 | 2.5 ± 0.8 | 4.0 ± 1.2 |
| Day 7 | 1.8 ± 0.6 | 3.2 ± 1.0 |
| Day 21 | 1.2 ± 0.4 | 2.0 ± 0.6 |

FLACC and VAS scores were consistently lower in the Nefopam group across all time points ($p<0.05$). The difference was most pronounced on Day 3 post-operation.

**Analgesic Consumption**

**Table 3: Comparison of Analgesic Consumption Between Groups**

| Time Point | Analgesic Consumption (Mean ± SD) |
|---|---|
| Day 3 | Nefopam: 40mg ± 5mg, Tramadol: 60mg ± 10mg |
| Day 7 | Nefopam: 25mg ± 5mg, Tramadol: 45mg ± 8mg |
| Day 21 | Nefopam: 15mg ± 3mg, Tramadol: 35mg ± 6mg |

Mean analgesic consumption was significantly lower in the Nefopam group compared to the Tramadol group at all time points ($p<0.05$).

**Safety Outcomes**

**Table 4: Incidence of Adverse Effects**

| Adverse Effect | Group A (Nefopam) | Group B (Tramadol) |
|---|---|---|
| Nausea | 4 (16%) | 8 (32%) |
| Vomiting | 2 (8%) | 6 (24%) |
| Respiratory Depression | 1 (4%) | 3 (12%) |

Nefopam demonstrated a more favourable safety profile with lower incidence of adverse effects, particularly gastrointestinal symptoms and respiratory depression.

**Discussion**

This study demonstrates superior analgesic efficacy of Nefopam compared to Tramadol in high-risk post-laparotomy patients. The lower pain scores and reduced analgesic consumption in the Nefopam group,

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combined with fewer adverse effects, suggest that Nefopam may be preferable in this population.

**Strengths and Limitations**

**Strengths:**

- Prospective, randomized design
- Focus on high-risk population
- Comprehensive pain assessment

**Limitations:**

- Single-centre study
- Relatively small sample size
- Short follow-up period

**Conclusions**

Nefopam provides more effective postoperative pain control with fewer adverse effects compared to Tramadol in high-risk post-laparotomy patients. These findings suggest that Nefopam should be considered as a first-line analgesic option in this population. Further multi-centre studies with larger sample sizes are needed to confirm these results.

**Acknowledgments**

We thank the staff of the Department of Surgery, Guru Nanak Dev Hospital, for their support in conducting this study.

**Funding**

No Funding was Taken

**Conflicts of Interest**

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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