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Summary

PERI-OPERATIVE COVID-19 INFECTION AND SUBSEQUENT MORTALITY DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Andrew Jackson

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Analysis of 1.2 million surgical patients in England between February 2020 and March 2022 found that while post-operative COVID-19 infection risk increased with more transmissible variants, associated mortality risk decreased in later pandemic waves.

KEY POINTS

- Among 1,213,890 surgical patients, 11,950 (0.9%) developed COVID-19 infection within 30 days post-operatively, with the highest rate of 2.5% occurring in wave 4, representing a 4.9-fold increase in infection risk compared to wave 1 (aHR 4.88, 95% CI 4.65-5.12).
- Post-operative COVID-19 infection increased 90-day mortality 8-fold (aHR 8.49, 95% CI 7.6-9.48) compared to patients without infection, while recent pre-operative infection (7-42 days prior) increased mortality 4-fold (aHR 3.84, 95% CI 3.31-4.45).
- Vaccination reduced mortality risk (aHR 0.11, 95% CI 0.09-0.13), and the elevated mortality risk associated with peri-operative COVID-19 infection decreased to non-COVID baseline levels in waves 3 and 4 for both emergency and elective procedures.
- This national cohort study using linked primary care, hospital, and death registry data provides evidence for clinicians managing surgical patients across different COVID-19 pandemic phases.

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