

■ INFOGRAPHIC

Infographic: Time to reconsider the routine use of tourniquets in total knee arthroplasty surgery

AN ABRIDGED VERSION OF A COCHRANE SYSTEMATIC REVIEW AND META-ANALYSIS

**I. Ahmed,
A. Chawla,
M. Underwood,
A. J. Price,
A. Metcalfe,
C. E. Hutchinson,
J. Warwick,
K. Seers,
H. Parsons,
P. D. H. Wall**

From Warwick Clinical Trials Unit in association with University Hospitals Coventry and Warwickshire NHS Trust, Coventry, UK.

Many surgeons choose to perform knee arthroplasty surgery with the aid of a tourniquet.^{1,2} A tourniquet is a device that fits around the leg and restricts blood flow to the limb. Until recently, the use of tourniquets has largely focused on the potential benefits, with little thought of the possible harms. We present an abridged version of a Cochrane systematic review, exploring the benefits and harms of tourniquet use in knee arthroplasty surgery.³ We included 41 randomized controlled trials with 2,819 participants.

Serious adverse events were significantly more common in the tourniquet group; 53/901 in the tourniquet group versus 26/898 no tourniquet groups (risk ratio 1.73; 95% confidence interval (CI) 1.10 to 2.73). The mean pain score on the first postoperative day was 1.25 points higher (95% CI 0.32 to 2.19) in the tourniquet group. Overall blood loss did not differ between groups (mean difference 8.61ml; 95% CI -83.76 to 100.97). The mean length of hospital stay was 0.34 days longer in the group that had surgery with a tourniquet (95% CI 0.03 to 0.64) and the mean duration of surgery was 3.7 minutes shorter (95% CI -5.53 to -1.87).

The results demonstrate that the use of a tourniquet in knee arthroplasty surgery is associated an increased risk of serious adverse events and higher levels of post-operative pain. Our estimates suggest that a change in practice among surgeons to not using a tourniquet could potentially prevent around 2,000 serious adverse events per year in the UK alone.

Further research is required for outcomes such as function, implant survival, and quality of life. However, there is currently no evidence to suggest any major advantage to the patient with the use of a tourniquet. These results make it difficult to justify the continued use of a tourniquet in knee arthroplasty surgery.

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Author information:

I. Ahmed, MRCS, MSc, NIHR Doctoral Fellow
A. Metcalfe, FRCS(Tr&Orth), PhD, Associate Professor of Trauma and Orthopaedic Surgery
P. D. H. Wall, FRCS(Tr&Orth), PhD, Associate Clinical Professor in Trauma & Orthopaedic Surgery
Warwick Clinical Trials Unit, University of Warwick, Coventry, UK; Trauma and Orthopaedic Surgery, University Hospitals Coventry and Warwickshire NHS Trust, Coventry, UK.

A. Chawla, MRCS, BSc, Speciality Trainee in Trauma & Orthopaedic Surgery, St Georges Hospital, London, UK.
M. Underwood, MD, FRCGP, Professor of Primary Care
J. Warwick, PhD, Professor of Statistics
H. Parsons, PhD, Associate Professor of Statistics
Warwick Clinical Trials Unit, University of Warwick, Coventry, UK.

A. J. Price, FRCS(Tr&Orth), DPhil, Professor of Orthopaedic Surgery, Nuffield Department of Orthopaedics, Musculoskeletal Sciences and Rheumatology, University of Oxford, Oxford, UK.

C. E. Hutchinson, MBChB, MD, Professor of Clinical Imaging
K. Seers, BSc(Hons), RN, PhD, Professor of Health Research
Warwick Medical School, University of Warwick, Coventry, UK.

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Correspondence should be sent to Peter D. H. Wall; email: p.d.h.wall@warwick.ac.uk

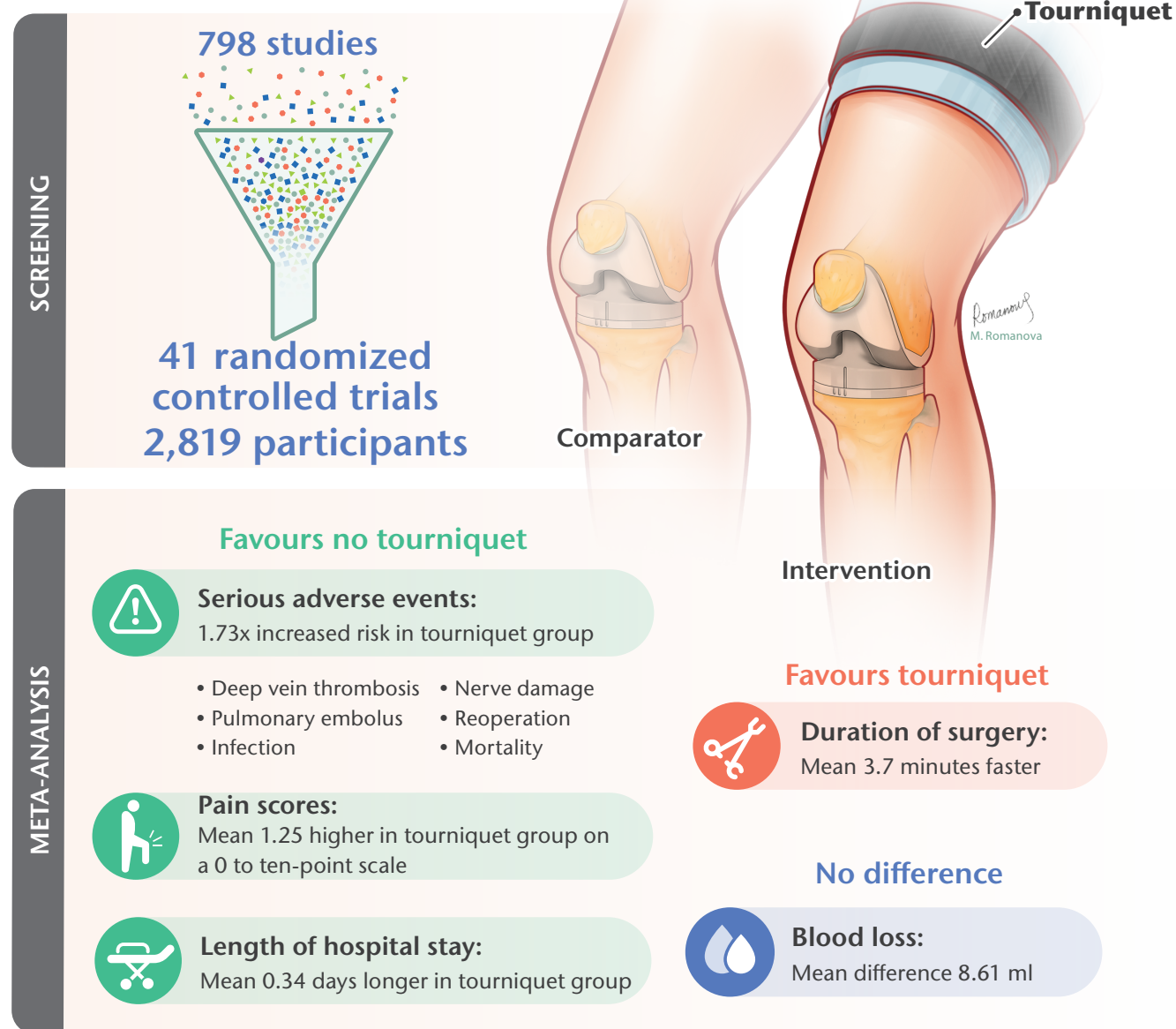
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Time to reconsider the routine use of tourniquets in total knee arthroplasty surgery

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This Cochrane systematic review and meta-analysis investigates the risks and benefits of tourniquet use in total knee arthroplasty (TKA) surgery.



TKA surgery with a tourniquet is associated with increased risks of serious adverse events, higher levels of postoperative pain, and a marginally longer duration of stay. These results make it difficult to justify the routine use of a tourniquet in TKA surgery.