
Chapter 4 “Conservative and surgical management of miscarriage”

Michelle Swer, Willem M Ankum and Davor Jurkovic

Expectant Management: “…chosen by women because of a desire for a natural approach…”

“Success rates: from 79% at 3 days to 93% by 7 weeks….for a reasonable chance of successful resolution (50%)…the woman should be counselled to allow 2 weeks for expected completion.”

“There is limited evidence on predicting the success of expectant management.”

“The main disadvantage….is the unpredictability of the timescale and the final outcome.”

“The duration of vaginal bleeding… a mean of 9.9 days with expectant management.”

Medical management: “The most commonly used drug ….is misoprostol…”

“Success rates ….. From 70% to 96% for incomplete miscarriage.”

“The main adverse effects of prostaglandin use are gastrointestinal symptoms including diarrhoea and vomiting, and increased bleeding…..nausea rate of 23% and a diarrhoea rate of 18%.”

“…the failure rate is significant and there is also a risk of emergency surgery.”

Surgical management: “Surgery remains the treatment of choice in women who present with excessive bleeding, are haemodynamically unstable, have signs of infected retained products…. or have a provisional diagnosis of gestational trophoblastic disease….or as an elective procedure … since it is quick and may help with the woman’s grieving process.”

“The use of manual vacuum aspiration was first described in the 1970s for surgical treatment of presumed incomplete miscarriages…..This procedure can also be performed in an outpatient setting under local anaesthesia, avoiding the need for an operating theatre. The benefits of outpatient procedures are increased safety owing to decreased surgical and anaesthesia risks, minimal social interruption and reduced costs.”

“Manual vacuum aspiration under local anaesthesia is an effective surgical alternative that can be offered to women who want early resolution of their miscarriage but wish to avoid general anaesthesia. It also has advantages for the healthcare provider by reducing hospital costs, waiting times and hospital stays.”
“Complications: The risk of retained products of conception is lower in surgical patients than in women undergoing medical management or expectant management with rates of 1-3% for surgical patients.”

“Excessive bleeding requiring blood transfusion is less likely to occur with surgical management than with medical or expectant management.”

“Cervical damage and uterine perforation are uncommon complications with rates of 0.3% and 1.9% quoted, respectively.”

Summary: “Surgical management is the most successful option for the management of miscarriage. Although conservative management has gained in popularity in recent years, 30% of women opt for surgery as their preferred primary treatment option. In addition, 30-40% of women required surgical evacuation because of unsuccessful conservative management. The introduction of evacuation under local anaesthesia may further enhance the role of surgery in the management of miscarriage, as many women try to avoid surgery because of a fear of general anaesthesia.”