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ЕЖЕМЕСЯЧНЫЙ НАУЧНЫЙ ЖУРНАЛ

Медицинские новости Грузии  
საქართველოს სამედიცინო სიახლენი

## GEORGIAN MEDICAL NEWS

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**GMN: Georgian Medical News** is peer-reviewed, published monthly journal committed to promoting the science and art of medicine and the betterment of public health, published by the GMN Editorial Board since 1994. GMN carries original scientific articles on medicine, biology and pharmacy, which are of experimental, theoretical and practical character; publishes original research, reviews, commentaries, editorials, essays, medical news, and correspondence in English and Russian.

GMN is indexed in MEDLINE, SCOPUS, PubMed and VINITI Russian Academy of Sciences. The full text content is available through EBSCO databases.

**GMN: Медицинские новости Грузии** - ежемесячный рецензируемый научный журнал, издаётся Редакционной коллегией с 1994 года на русском и английском языках в целях поддержки медицинской науки и улучшения здравоохранения. В журнале публикуются оригинальные научные статьи в области медицины, биологии и фармации, статьи обзорного характера, научные сообщения, новости медицины и здравоохранения. Журнал индексируется в MEDLINE, отражён в базе данных SCOPUS, PubMed и ВИНТИ РАН. Полнотекстовые статьи журнала доступны через БД EBSCO.

**GMN: Georgian Medical News** – საქართველოს სამედიცინო სიახლენი – არის ყოველთვიური სამეცნიერო სამედიცინო რეცენზირებადი ჟურნალი, გამოიცემა 1994 წლიდან, წარმოადგენს სარედაქციო კოლეგიისა და აშშ-ის მეცნიერების, განათლების, ინდუსტრიის, ხელოვნებისა და ბუნებისმეტყველების საერთაშორისო აკადემიის ერთობლივ გამოცემას. GMN-ში რუსულ და ინგლისურ ენებზე ქვეყნდება ექსპერიმენტული, თეორიული და პრაქტიკული ხასიათის ორიგინალური სამეცნიერო სტატიები მედიცინის, ბიოლოგიისა და ფარმაციის სფეროში, მიმოხილვითი ხასიათის სტატიები.

ჟურნალი ინდექსირებულია MEDLINE-ის საერთაშორისო სისტემაში, ასახულია SCOPUS-ის, PubMed-ის და ВИНТИ РАН-ის მონაცემთა ბაზებში. სტატიების სრული ტექსტი ხელმისაწვდომია EBSCO-ს მონაცემთა ბაზებშიდან.

### WEBSITE

[www.geomednews.com](http://www.geomednews.com)

## К СВЕДЕНИЮ АВТОРОВ!

При направлении статьи в редакцию необходимо соблюдать следующие правила:

1. Статья должна быть представлена в двух экземплярах, на русском или английском языках, напечатанная через **полтора интервала на одной стороне стандартного листа с шириной левого поля в три сантиметра**. Используемый компьютерный шрифт для текста на русском и английском языках - **Times New Roman (Кириллица)**, для текста на грузинском языке следует использовать **AcadNusx**. Размер шрифта - **12**. К рукописи, напечатанной на компьютере, должен быть приложен CD со статьей.

2. Размер статьи должен быть не менее десяти и не более двадцати страниц машинописи, включая указатель литературы и резюме на английском, русском и грузинском языках.

3. В статье должны быть освещены актуальность данного материала, методы и результаты исследования и их обсуждение.

При представлении в печать научных экспериментальных работ авторы должны указывать вид и количество экспериментальных животных, применявшиеся методы обезболивания и усыпления (в ходе острых опытов).

4. К статье должны быть приложены краткое (на полстраницы) резюме на английском, русском и грузинском языках (включающее следующие разделы: цель исследования, материал и методы, результаты и заключение) и список ключевых слов (key words).

5. Таблицы необходимо представлять в печатной форме. Фотокопии не принимаются. **Все цифровые, итоговые и процентные данные в таблицах должны соответствовать таковым в тексте статьи**. Таблицы и графики должны быть озаглавлены.

6. Фотографии должны быть контрастными, фотокопии с рентгенограмм - в позитивном изображении. Рисунки, чертежи и диаграммы следует озаглавить, пронумеровать и вставить в соответствующее место текста **в tiff формате**.

В подписях к микрофотографиям следует указывать степень увеличения через окуляр или объектив и метод окраски или импрегнации срезов.

7. Фамилии отечественных авторов приводятся в оригинальной транскрипции.

8. При оформлении и направлении статей в журнал МНГ просим авторов соблюдать правила, изложенные в «Единых требованиях к рукописям, представляемым в биомедицинские журналы», принятых Международным комитетом редакторов медицинских журналов - <http://www.spinesurgery.ru/files/publish.pdf> и [http://www.nlm.nih.gov/bsd/uniform\\_requirements.html](http://www.nlm.nih.gov/bsd/uniform_requirements.html) В конце каждой оригинальной статьи приводится библиографический список. В список литературы включаются все материалы, на которые имеются ссылки в тексте. Список составляется в алфавитном порядке и нумеруется. Литературный источник приводится на языке оригинала. В списке литературы сначала приводятся работы, написанные знаками грузинского алфавита, затем кириллицей и латиницей. Ссылки на цитируемые работы в тексте статьи даются в квадратных скобках в виде номера, соответствующего номеру данной работы в списке литературы. Большинство цитированных источников должны быть за последние 5-7 лет.

9. Для получения права на публикацию статья должна иметь от руководителя работы или учреждения визу и сопроводительное отношение, написанные или напечатанные на бланке и заверенные подписью и печатью.

10. В конце статьи должны быть подписи всех авторов, полностью приведены их фамилии, имена и отчества, указаны служебный и домашний номера телефонов и адреса или иные координаты. Количество авторов (соавторов) не должно превышать пяти человек.

11. Редакция оставляет за собой право сокращать и исправлять статьи. Корректур авторам не высылаются, вся работа и сверка проводится по авторскому оригиналу.

12. Недопустимо направление в редакцию работ, представленных к печати в иных издательствах или опубликованных в других изданиях.

**При нарушении указанных правил статьи не рассматриваются.**

## REQUIREMENTS

Please note, materials submitted to the Editorial Office Staff are supposed to meet the following requirements:

1. Articles must be provided with a double copy, in English or Russian languages and typed or computer-printed on a single side of standard typing paper, with the left margin of 3 centimeters width, and 1.5 spacing between the lines, typeface - **Times New Roman (Cyrillic)**, print size - 12 (referring to Georgian and Russian materials). With computer-printed texts please enclose a CD carrying the same file titled with Latin symbols.

2. Size of the article, including index and resume in English, Russian and Georgian languages must be at least 10 pages and not exceed the limit of 20 pages of typed or computer-printed text.

3. Submitted material must include a coverage of a topical subject, research methods, results, and review.

Authors of the scientific-research works must indicate the number of experimental biological species drawn in, list the employed methods of anesthetization and soporific means used during acute tests.

4. Articles must have a short (half page) abstract in English, Russian and Georgian (including the following sections: aim of study, material and methods, results and conclusions) and a list of key words.

5. Tables must be presented in an original typed or computer-printed form, instead of a photocopied version. **Numbers, totals, percentile data on the tables must coincide with those in the texts of the articles.** Tables and graphs must be headed.

6. Photographs are required to be contrasted and must be submitted with doubles. Please number each photograph with a pencil on its back, indicate author's name, title of the article (short version), and mark out its top and bottom parts. Drawings must be accurate, drafts and diagrams drawn in Indian ink (or black ink). Photocopies of the X-ray photographs must be presented in a positive image in **tiff format**.

Accurately numbered subtitles for each illustration must be listed on a separate sheet of paper. In the subtitles for the microphotographs please indicate the ocular and objective lens magnification power, method of coloring or impregnation of the microscopic sections (preparations).

7. Please indicate last names, first and middle initials of the native authors, present names and initials of the foreign authors in the transcription of the original language, enclose in parenthesis corresponding number under which the author is listed in the reference materials.

8. Please follow guidance offered to authors by The International Committee of Medical Journal Editors guidance in its Uniform Requirements for Manuscripts Submitted to Biomedical Journals publication available online at: [http://www.nlm.nih.gov/bsd/uniform\\_requirements.html](http://www.nlm.nih.gov/bsd/uniform_requirements.html)  
[http://www.icmje.org/urm\\_full.pdf](http://www.icmje.org/urm_full.pdf)

In GMN style for each work cited in the text, a bibliographic reference is given, and this is located at the end of the article under the title "References". All references cited in the text must be listed. The list of references should be arranged alphabetically and then numbered. References are numbered in the text [numbers in square brackets] and in the reference list and numbers are repeated throughout the text as needed. The bibliographic description is given in the language of publication (citations in Georgian script are followed by Cyrillic and Latin).

9. To obtain the rights of publication articles must be accompanied by a visa from the project instructor or the establishment, where the work has been performed, and a reference letter, both written or typed on a special signed form, certified by a stamp or a seal.

10. Articles must be signed by all of the authors at the end, and they must be provided with a list of full names, office and home phone numbers and addresses or other non-office locations where the authors could be reached. The number of the authors (co-authors) must not exceed the limit of 5 people.

11. Editorial Staff reserves the rights to cut down in size and correct the articles. Proof-sheets are not sent out to the authors. The entire editorial and collation work is performed according to the author's original text.

12. Sending in the works that have already been assigned to the press by other Editorial Staffs or have been printed by other publishers is not permissible.

**Articles that Fail to Meet the Aforementioned  
Requirements are not Assigned to be Reviewed.**

## ავტორთა საქურაღებოლ!

რედაქციაში სტატიის წარმოდგენისას საჭიროა დაიცვათ შემდეგი წესები:

1. სტატია უნდა წარმოადგინოთ 2 ცალად, რუსულ ან ინგლისურ ენებზე დაბეჭდილი სტანდარტული ფურცლის 1 გვერდზე, 3 სმ სიგანის მარცხენა ველისა და სტრიქონებს შორის 1,5 ინტერვალის დაცვით. გამოყენებული კომპიუტერული შრიფტი რუსულ და ინგლისურენოვან ტექსტებში - **Times New Roman (Кириллица)**, ხოლო ქართულენოვან ტექსტში საჭიროა გამოვიყენოთ **AcadNusx**. შრიფტის ზომა – 12. სტატიას თან უნდა ახლდეს CD სტატიით.

2. სტატიის მოცულობა არ უნდა შეადგენდეს 10 გვერდზე ნაკლებს და 20 გვერდზე მეტს ლიტერატურის სიის და რეზიუმეების (ინგლისურ, რუსულ და ქართულ ენებზე) ჩათვლით.

3. სტატიაში საჭიროა გაშუქდეს: საკითხის აქტუალობა; კვლევის მიზანი; საკვლევი მასალა და გამოყენებული მეთოდები; მიღებული შედეგები და მათი განსჯა. ექსპერიმენტული ხასიათის სტატიების წარმოდგენისას ავტორებმა უნდა მიუთითონ საექსპერიმენტო ცხოველების სახეობა და რაოდენობა; გაუტკივარებისა და დაძინების მეთოდები (მწვავე ცდების პირობებში).

4. სტატიას თან უნდა ახლდეს რეზიუმე ინგლისურ, რუსულ და ქართულ ენებზე არანაკლებ ნახევარი გვერდის მოცულობისა (სათაურის, ავტორების, დაწესებულების მითითებით და უნდა შეიცავდეს შემდეგ განყოფილებებს: მიზანი, მასალა და მეთოდები, შედეგები და დასკვნები; ტექსტუალური ნაწილი არ უნდა იყოს 15 სტრიქონზე ნაკლები) და საკვანძო სიტყვების ჩამონათვალი (key words).

5. ცხრილები საჭიროა წარმოადგინოთ ნაბეჭდი სახით. ყველა ციფრული, შემაჯამებელი და პროცენტული მონაცემები უნდა შეესაბამებოდეს ტექსტში მოყვანილს.

6. ფოტოსურათები უნდა იყოს კონტრასტული; სურათები, ნახაზები, დიაგრამები - დასათაურებული, დანომრილი და სათანადო ადგილას ჩასმული. რენტგენოგრამების ფოტოასლები წარმოადგინეთ პოზიტიური გამოსახულებით **tiff** ფორმატში. მიკროფოტოსურათების წარწერებში საჭიროა მიუთითოთ ოკულარის ან ობიექტივის საშუალებით გადიდების ხარისხი, ანათალების შედეგების ან იმპრეგნაციის მეთოდი და აღნიშნოთ სურათის ზედა და ქვედა ნაწილები.

7. სამამულო ავტორების გვარები სტატიაში აღინიშნება ინიციალების თანდართვით, უცხოურისა – უცხოური ტრანსკრიპციით.

8. სტატიას თან უნდა ახლდეს ავტორის მიერ გამოყენებული სამამულო და უცხოური შრომების ბიბლიოგრაფიული სია (ბოლო 5-8 წლის სიღრმით). ანბანური წყობით წარმოდგენილ ბიბლიოგრაფიულ სიაში მიუთითეთ ჯერ სამამულო, შემდეგ უცხოელი ავტორები (გვარი, ინიციალები, სტატიის სათაური, ჟურნალის დასახელება, გამოცემის ადგილი, წელი, ჟურნალის №, პირველი და ბოლო გვერდები). მონოგრაფიის შემთხვევაში მიუთითეთ გამოცემის წელი, ადგილი და გვერდების საერთო რაოდენობა. ტექსტში კვადრატულ ფხიხლებში უნდა მიუთითოთ ავტორის შესაბამისი N ლიტერატურის სიის მიხედვით. მიზანშეწონილია, რომ ციტირებული წყაროების უმეტესი ნაწილი იყოს 5-6 წლის სიღრმის.

9. სტატიას თან უნდა ახლდეს: ა) დაწესებულების ან სამეცნიერო ხელმძღვანელის წარდგინება, დამოწმებული ხელმოწერითა და ბეჭდით; ბ) დარგის სპეციალისტის დამოწმებული რეცენზია, რომელშიც მითითებული იქნება საკითხის აქტუალობა, მასალის საკმაობა, მეთოდის სანდოობა, შედეგების სამეცნიერო-პრაქტიკული მნიშვნელობა.

10. სტატიის ბოლოს საჭიროა ყველა ავტორის ხელმოწერა, რომელთა რაოდენობა არ უნდა აღემატებოდეს 5-ს.

11. რედაქცია იტოვებს უფლებას შეასწოროს სტატია. ტექსტზე მუშაობა და შეჯერება ხდება საავტორო ორიგინალის მიხედვით.

12. დაუშვებელია რედაქციაში ისეთი სტატიის წარდგენა, რომელიც დასაბეჭდად წარდგენილი იყო სხვა რედაქციაში ან გამოქვეყნებული იყო სხვა გამოცემებში.

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## SURGICAL TREATMENT STRATEGIES OF DEEP STERNAL WOUND INFECTION FOLLOWING CARDIAC SURGERY

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### Abstract.

**Background:** Deep sternal wound infection (DSWI) is a life-threatening complication following cardiac surgery. This study aimed to evaluate different surgical treatment approaches for DSWI.

**Methods:** We retrospectively analysed the treatment outcomes of 70 DSWI patients treated at two hospitals within the same region. Hospital 1 admitted patients shortly after the onset of complications, applying surgical debridement supplemented by negative pressure wound therapy (NPWT), with rewiring used predominantly to close the sternal wound. Patients in Hospital 2 experienced delayed hospitalization and underwent simultaneous surgical treatment and reconstruction, most often using pectoralis major flap reconstruction. The duration of hospitalization, 30-day and 1-year mortality rates, and recurrence of infection were evaluated.

**Results:** The incidence of DSWI following cardiac surgery was 1.5%. *Staphylococcus spp.* was the most commonly isolated pathogen. The median treatment delay for patients in Hospital 1 was 1 day [IQR: 1–2], compared to 13 days [IQR: 8–24] in Hospital 2. Consequently, patients in Hospital 2 often had significant sternal defects post-debridement, necessitating flap reconstruction. In Hospital 1, prompt surgical intervention allowed preservation of a substantial portion of the sternum, with NPWT facilitating rapid control of acute inflammation. Sternal reconstruction predominantly involved rewiring, which restored chest stability. The mean hospitalization duration was 25 days [IQR: 16–30] in Hospital 1 and 22 days [IQR: 16–29] in Hospital 2. 30-day mortality rates were 5% in Hospital 1 and 6% in Hospital 2, with 1-year mortality rates of 10.5% and 4.3%, respectively. Infection recurrence rates were 15% in Hospital 1 and 24% in Hospital 2.

**Conclusions:** The timing of surgical debridement is crucial in managing DSWI. When sufficient sternal tissue is preserved, rewiring is a viable option. Flap reconstruction is effective, particularly in cases involving extensive bone destruction.

**Key words.** Deep sternal wound infection, osteomyelitis, sternal reconstruction, negative pressure wound therapy.

### Introduction.

Each year, the number of open-heart surgeries steadily increases. The classic surgical approach is typically a median sternotomy. Cardiac surgery generally concludes with the restoration of sternal integrity and the suturing of soft tissues. One of the most serious postoperative complications

is the development of infection in the surgical area [1,2]. Both superficial and, especially, deep sternal infections can significantly impact the outcomes of cardiac surgery, increasing postoperative mortality, inpatient treatment duration, material costs, and the challenges of medical and social rehabilitation [3,4].

Experience accumulated in treating infectious complications in cardiac surgery highlights the importance of timely and adequate surgical intervention, which includes removing all non-viable tissues and infected foreign bodies [3,5]. While most authors agree on this initial treatment step, further treatment strategies remain a topic of much debate. It should be noted that some publications question the necessity of sternal resection for sternal osteomyelitis, instead favoring conservative treatment approaches [6]. The use of negative pressure wound therapy (NPWT) has become widespread in treating postoperative sternal infections [7,8]. Despite the advantages of NPWT, questions remain regarding its optimal duration. Many authors believe that NPWT should be limited to a few days, after which reconstructive surgery should follow [9,10]. Conversely, some experts advocate continuing NPWT until the infection is fully eradicated, changing vacuum-assisted dressings every 3–4 days [11,12]. An alternative approach—simultaneous surgical debridement and reconstructive surgery—is gaining support, with NPWT recommended only when the patient's condition is unstable [13–15].

The gold standard for reconstructive surgery in DSWI is defect closure using a flap, which provides optimal conditions for wound healing [7,16]. The most commonly used flaps are the pectoralis major (PM) flap, available in two versions: the traditional PM advancement flap and the turnover flap based on the internal mammary artery perforators (IMAP flap). The PM flap is considered a reliable option for covering defects in the upper two-thirds of the sternum [17]. The choice of PM flap version depends on defect size and the presence or absence of the internal mammary artery (IMA). For reconstructions in the lower third of the sternum, the rectus abdominis flap is preferred [18].

The latissimus dorsi (LD) flap is an option when both IMAs are taken. This flap can be muscular or musculocutaneous and is typically used for defects in the upper half of the sternum. Its drawbacks include the need for an additional incision at the donor site and repositioning of the patient during surgery [19]. The greater omentum (GO) flap offers advantages such as large size, good blood supply, a long pedicle, and readiness to accept



a split-thickness skin graft without waiting for granulation tissue to form. It can serve as an alternative to other flaps or be used in combination with them. However, using the GO flap involves entering the abdomen and dissecting the diaphragm, which may lead to hernia formation, a risk that can be reduced with laparoscopic techniques [20,21].

Despite extensive study on sternal flap reconstructions, the optimal timing for their implementation varies among authors, ranging from early to delayed or late reconstructions. However, most experts favour early reconstruction [22,23]. Early timing of reconstructive surgery has been shown to significantly impact the rates of readmission and reoperation due to infection [24].

Although flap reconstruction is considered the gold standard for DSWI treatment, some authors emphasize the need for sternal reosteosynthesis to improve chest stability [25-27]. Rewiring or titanium plating is generally recommended. Rewiring is typically possible when sufficient bone tissue remains after debridement [28]. However, even with limited bone tissue, rigid fixation options, combined with flaps or allografts, have been proposed [29].

Thus, the treatment of severe complications such as DSWI still involves numerous unresolved issues and controversies, highlighting the need for further research.

## Methods.

### Methodology:

The treatment outcomes of 70 patients with infectious complications following median sternotomy, treated between 2021 and 2024, were retrospectively analysed. These patients were examined and treated in two clinical centres within the same region, each with distinct hospitalization practices. In Hospital No. 1, only patients who had undergone cardiac surgery in its cardiac surgery department were admitted to the surgical infection department. Conversely, Hospital No. 2 admitted patients who had cardiac surgeries performed in various hospitals across the region. Patient medical records were selected for analysis by random sequential sampling. Inclusion criteria were deep sternal wound infection (DSWI) following cardiac surgery, and patients were between 18 and 80 years old. Exclusion criteria included superficial sternal wound infections and corticosteroid hormones.

The study analysed patients' age and sex, the time elapsed between cardiac surgery and initial debridement, and the period from the onset of infection symptoms to initial debridement. The impact of diabetes mellitus and early resternotomy (for bleeding) on the incidence of DSWI was also examined. Additionally, data on inpatient treatment duration, 30-day and 1-year mortality, and infection recurrence rates were assessed. Microbiological studies provided insight into the composition of the microflora and its antibiotic sensitivity.

### Compliance with ethical standards and consent to participate:

The local institutional review board approved the use of patient data for research purposes prior to data review, and this study was deemed exempt from continued review. Informed consent was not required due to the retrospective nature of the study. However, all participants or their legal guardians provided written informed consent for the collection of personal

and medical data prior to study enrolment. All procedures were conducted in accordance with the ethical standards of the responsible committee on human experimentation (both institutional and national) and the Helsinki Declaration of 1975, as revised in 2008.

### Statistical data analysis:

Statistical processing was carried out by collecting and grouping factual material and calculating the median (Me) and interquartile range (IQR). The distribution of "normality" was determined using the Shapiro–Wilk normality test. The significance of the difference for nonparametric indicators was determined using the Mann–Whitney U test. Differences in indicators at  $p < 0.05$  were considered statistically significant.

## Results.

### Treatment approaches:

In Hospital No. 1 (20 patients), treatment followed this protocol: surgical debridement with removal of visibly non-viable soft tissues and bone structures, removal of wire fixators, and extensive opening of the anterior mediastinum. The wound was re-evaluated the next day, and NPWT was initiated. In one patient, vacuum-assisted dressings were changed 1–2 times, lasting up to 3 days each, before reconstructive surgery commenced. Surgical options were chosen based on the sternum's condition. If sufficient bone tissue remained, rewiring was performed, with the anterior mediastinum drained and soft tissues over the sternum sutured. For sternal defects, flap reconstruction using a PM flap was employed. Rewiring was completed in 18 patients (90%), flap reconstruction in 1 patient (5%), and 1 patient died before reconstruction (Table 1).

**Table 1.** Summary of reconstructive surgery.

	Hospital 1	Hospital 2	<b>p</b>
Rewiring	90 %	12 %	0.0014
Total of flap reconstruction	5 %	88 %	0.0001
1 Advancement PM flap	-	56 %	-
2 IMAP flap	5 %	30 %	0.0201
3 LD flap	-	2 %	-

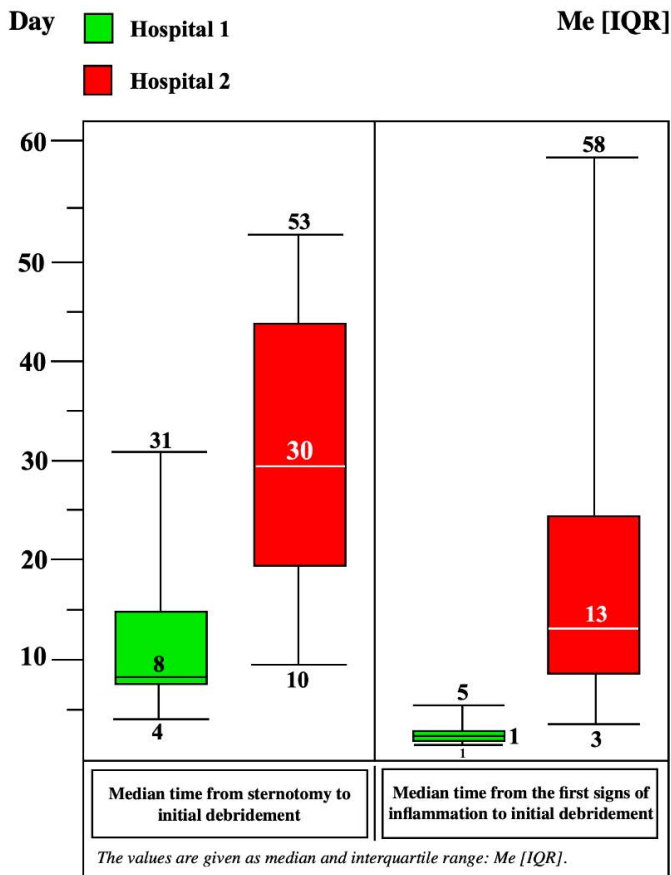
Advancement PM flap - Advancement pectoralis major flap; IMAP flap - turnover flap based on perforators of the internal mammary artery; LD flap - latissimus dorsi flap.

In Hospital No. 2 (50 patients), initial debridement and sternal reconstruction were performed simultaneously. Rewiring was performed in 6 cases, and various flap options were used to address sternal defects in 44 cases: PM advancement flap in 28 cases, IMAP flap in 15 cases, and LD flap in 1 case (Table 1).

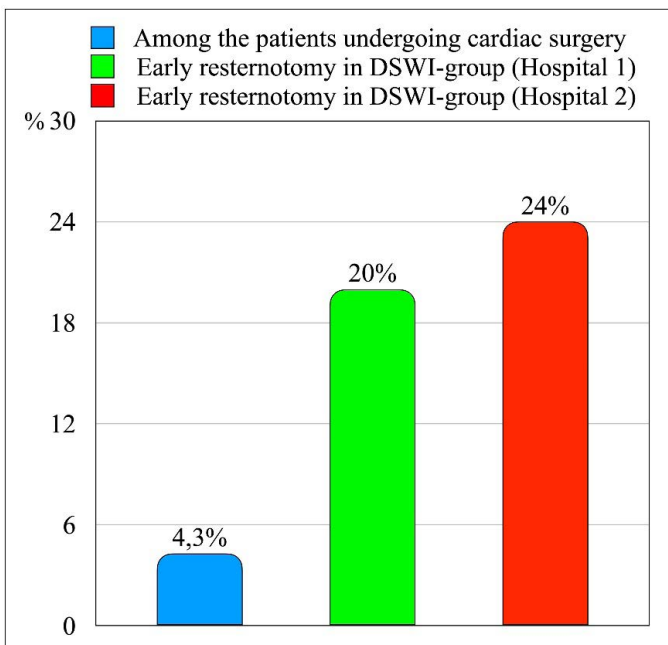
All patients were treated with IV-generation antibiotics.

### Hospital 1:

Among 1334 sternotomies performed in the Department of Cardiac Surgery at Hospital 1 between 2021 and 2024, the incidence of DSWI was 1.5% (20 cases). The mean age of patients was 65 years [IQR: 57–66], with men comprising the majority – 14 cases (70%). The median time from sternotomy to DSWI surgery was 8 days [IQR: 6–14], and from the onset of inflammation to initial debridement, 1 day [IQR: 1–2] (Figure 1).



**Figure 1.** Median time from sternotomy to initial debridement and the first signs of inflammation to initial debridement.



**Figure 2.** Effect of early re-sternotomy on the occurrence of deep sternal wound infection.

Diabetes mellitus was noted in 9 (45%) of the DSWI cases and in 43% of all patients who underwent median sternotomy. Additionally, 4 (20%) patients required early re-sternotomy for postoperative bleeding, compared to 4.3% of all cardiac surgery patients (Figure 2).

A pathogen was identified through microbiological examination in 17 (85%) cases, with *Staphylococcus spp.* predominating among gram-positive bacteria, and *Klebsiella pneumoniae* and *Acinetobacter spp.* among gram-negative bacteria (Figure 3).

The median number of surgical debridements per patient was 2 [IQR: 1–3]. The 30-day mortality rate among patients in Hospital 1 was 5% (1 case), due to progressive infection. The median duration of inpatient treatment was 25 days [IQR: 16–30]. Patients were followed up for a median of 18 months postoperatively [IQR: 12–24]. During this period, 2 deaths (10.5%) were recorded due to non-infectious causes. Infection recurrences occurred in 3 cases (15%), necessitating rehospitalisation and further surgeries (Table 2).

**Table 2.** Descriptive statistics.

	Hospital 1	Hospital 2	p
Hospital stays, days Me [IQR]	25 [16-30]	22 [16-29]	0.0001
Recurrence of infection	15 %	24 %	0.0305
30-day mortality	5 %	6 %	0.1201
1-year mortality	10,5 %	4,3 %	0.0142

### Hospital 2:

The mean age of patients at Hospital 2 was 66 years [IQR: 58–71], with men comprising 68% (34 cases). The median time from cardiac surgery to DSWI debridement was 30 days [IQR: 20–44], and from the onset of infection symptoms to debridement, 13 days [IQR: 8–24] (Figure 1). Diabetes mellitus was present in 18 (36%) patients. 12 (24%) patients had previously undergone re-sternotomy for bleeding (Figure 2). Microflora was identified in 34 (68%) cases, with *Staphylococcus spp.*, *Klebsiella pneumoniae*, and *Escherichia coli* being the most common (Figure 3).

The 30-day mortality rate was 6% (3 patients), with infection-related causes in two of these cases. The median duration of inpatient treatment was 22 days [IQR: 16–29]. The follow-up period post-discharge was 12 months [IQR: 9–16]. The post-discharge mortality rate was 4.3% (2 patients), with one case related to infection. Recurrences of infection were observed in 12 cases (24%) (Table 2).

### Discussion.

In our observations, the number of DSWI cases after cardiac surgery did not exceed 1.5%, which aligns with data from other authors [30]. Although our goal was not to analyse multiple potential DSWI risk factors, we did examine the impact of diabetes mellitus and early postoperative re-sternotomy due to bleeding. The analysis showed that diabetes mellitus was not a

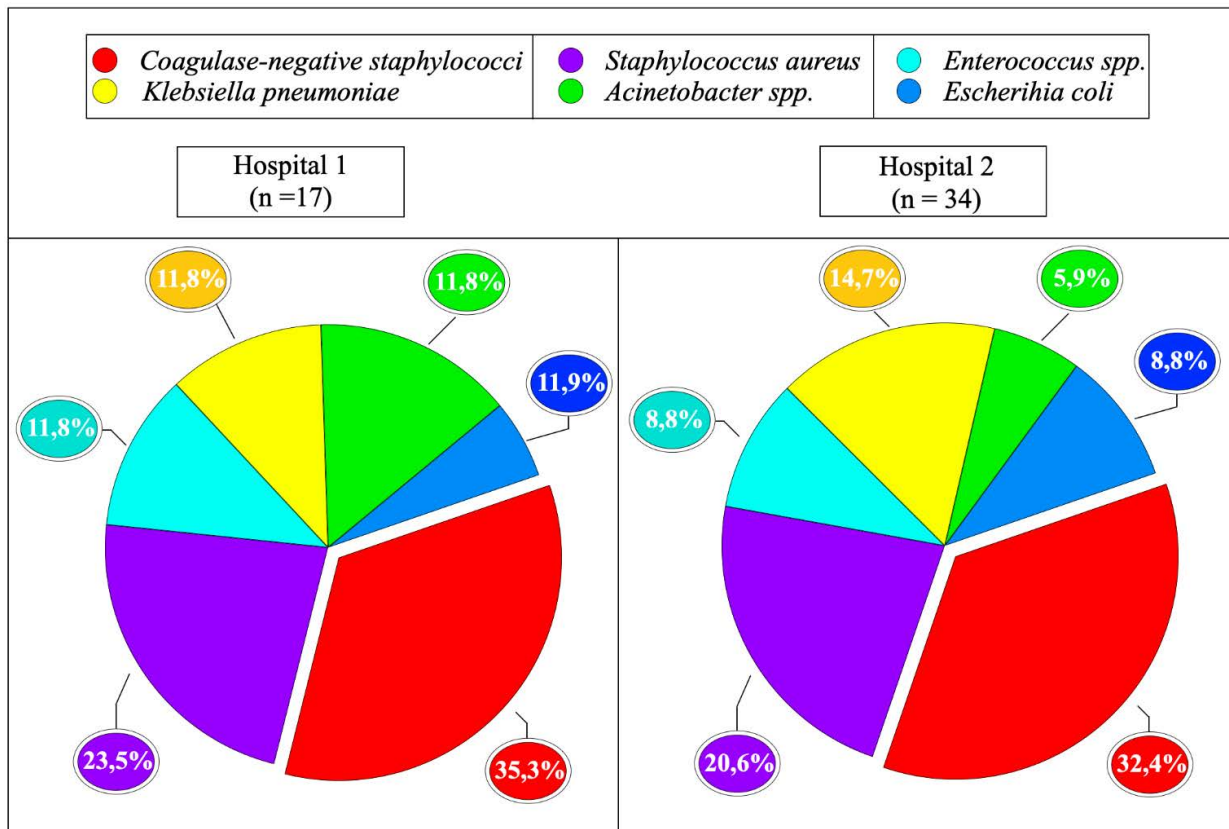


Figure 3. The microorganisms cultured from patients with deep sternal wound infection.

risk factor for DSWI in our observations ( $p>0.05$ ). Data from other authors on this issue are contradictory; however, it is more common to encounter similar findings that diabetes mellitus cannot be considered a risk factor for DSWI development [31-33]. Conversely, re sternotomy, according to some authors, significantly increases the risk of DSWI [10,20]. According to our data, the re sternotomy rate among cardiac surgery patients was 4.3%. Among DSWI patients, previous re sternotomy was significantly more frequent (20% in Hospital 1 and 24% in Hospital 2). Therefore, re sternotomy is a significant risk factor for the development of DSWI.

Patients in Hospital 1 were transferred to the surgical infection department with a picture of acute inflammation (in the early stages after cardiac surgery). Patients admitted in Hospital 2 had a subacute or chronic course of the septic process. These facts determined the longer Hospital stay in hospital 1. The 1-year mortality of patients treated at Hospital 1 was higher than that of patients at Hospital 2. However, it was not associated with infection.

One of the main differences between patients treated in Hospitals 1 and 2 was the timing of surgical debridement from the onset of initial infection signs. Given that Hospital 1 had both the Cardiac Surgery and Surgical Infection Departments, surgical debridement at the first sign of DSWI was performed immediately. This approach contributed to the preservation of a significant amount of bone tissue and enabled rewiring, thereby restoring the rigid frame of the chest. Due to the unique admission process in Hospital 2, surgical debridement was performed a considerable time after the inflammatory process

began. This delay resulted in substantial loss of sternal bone, necessitating reconstruction predominantly with muscle flaps. Unfortunately, the infection recurrence rate in these cases was quite high, consistent with findings from other researchers [24]. Therefore, differentiated surgical management in DSWI treatment involves performing surgical debridement as early as possible. In Hospital 1, NPWT was used only as a short-term preparatory phase for reconstruction. Depending on the extent of bone destruction, a choice was made between rewiring and flap reconstruction. Immediate or early sternal reconstructions are preferable to delayed or late reconstructions [34,35]. In our studies, this is supported by the low 30-day mortality rate and shorter inpatient treatment duration. A reduction in infection recurrence rates following rewiring can be achieved by more rigorous patient selection.

However, this study has a number of limitations, including its retrospective nature and the relatively small sample size in Hospital 2, which may reduce the reliability of the conclusions drawn.

### Conclusion.

As a life-threatening complication in cardiac surgery, DSWI underscores the need for a clear treatment algorithm. Timely and thorough surgical debridement is the cornerstone of this sequela treatment. However, without a reconstructive phase, the treatment process cannot be effectively completed. Different methods of reconstruction in DSWI each have their advantages, disadvantages, and optimal conditions for application. All of these factors should be considered carefully when planning treatment strategies.

## Declaration of Conflicting Interests.

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## Ethical Statement.

The authors are accountable for all aspects of the work in ensuring that questions related to the accuracy or integrity of any part of the work are appropriately investigated and resolved. All procedures performed in this study were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research committee(s) and with the Helsinki Declaration (as revised in 2013). Written informed consent was obtained from the patient for the publication of this case report and accompanying images. A copy of the written consent is available for review by the editorial office of this journal.

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## РЕЗЮМЕ

**Стратегии хирургического лечения послеоперационного стерномедиастинита**

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## Введение.

Послеоперационный стерномедиастинит (deep sternal wound infection – DSWI) представляет собой грозное осложнение для жизни. Целью данного исследования стала оценка подходов к хирургическому лечению DSWI и обоснование лечебного алгоритма в зависимости от характера и распространенности патологического процесса.

## Методы.

Был проведен ретроспективный анализ результатов лечения 70 пациентов с DSWI, проходивших лечение в двух клинических центрах одного региона. Лечение пациентов госпиталя №1 (20 пациентов) проходило по следующей схеме: хирургическая обработка с удалением визуально нежизнеспособных мягких тканей и костных структур, удаление проволочных фиксаторов, широкое раскрытие переднего средостения. Через сутки выполнялась ревизия раны и установка системы для лечения ран отрицательным давлением (negative pressure wound therapy – NPWT). В госпитале №2 преобладала продолжительность заболевания до обращения за медицинской помощью, первичная хирургическая обработка и реконструкция грудины выполнялись одновременно, чаще всего с использованием лоскута большой грудной мышцы. Изучена продолжительность стационарного лечения пациентов, 30-дневная и 1-годовая летальность, а также частота рецидивов инфекции.

## Результаты.

Частота возникновения DSWI после операции на сердце составила 1,5%. Наиболее частым возбудителем стал *Staphylococcus spp.* Продолжительность заболевания до обращения за медицинской помощью в госпитале №1 составила 1 день [МКИ: 1–2] в сравнении с 13 днями [МКИ: 8–24] в госпитале №2. Таким образом, у пациентов в госпитале №2 чаще наблюдались значительные дефекты грудины после хирургической обработки, что требовало реконструктивной операции с использованием лоскута. В госпитале №1 своевременная хирургическая обработка позволила сохранить значительное количество костной ткани, а использование NPWT способствовало адекватному контролю острого воспаления. Реконструкция грудины в основном включала проволочную фиксацию с целью повышения стабильности грудной клетки. Средняя продолжительность стационарного лечения составила 25 дней [МКИ: 16–30] в госпитале №1 и 22 дня [МКИ: 16–29] в госпитале №2. Показатели 30-дневной летальности составили 5% в госпитале №1 и 6% в госпитале №2, а показатели 1-годовой летальности – 10,5% и 4,3% соответственно. Частота рецидивов инфекции составила 15% в госпитале №1 и 24% в госпитале №2.

## Выводы.

Своевременная и полноценная хирургическая обработка имеет решающее значение при лечении DSWI. Достаточное количество костной ткани позволяет провести проволочную фиксацию грудины. Реконструкция лоскутом эффективна в случаях обширного разрушения костной ткани.

**Ключевые слова:** Послеоперационный стерномедиастинит, Остеомиелит, Реконструкция грудины, Лечение ран отрицательным давлением.

ქირურგიული მკურნალობის სტრატეგიები გულმკერდის ღრმა ჭრილობის ინფექციისთვის გულის ოპერაციის შემდეგ

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აბსტრაქტი.

ფონი.

გულმკერდის ღრმა ჭრილობის ინფექცია (DSWI) არის სიცოცხლისათვის საშიში გართულება გულის ოპერაციის შემდეგ. ეს კვლევა მიზნად ისახავდა DSWI-ს ქირურგიული მკურნალობის სხვადასხვა მიდგომის შეფასებას.

მეთოდები.

ჩვენ რეტროსპექტულად გავაანალიზეთ 70 DSWI პაციენტის მკურნალობის შედეგები, რომლებიც მკურნალობდნენ იმავე რეგიონის ორ საავადმყოფოში. ჰოსპიტალმა 1-მა მიიღო პაციენტები გართულებების დაწყებიდან მალევე, გამოიყენეს ქირურგიული დებრიდმენტი, რომელიც დამატებული იყო უარყოფითი წნევის ჭრილობის თერაპიით (NPWT) და ხელახალი გაყვანილობა, ძირითადად, სტერნის ჭრილობის დასახურავად. მე-2 საავადმყოფოში პაციენტებს

განუვითარდათ დაგვიანებული ჰოსპიტალიზაცია და ჩაუტარდათ ერთდროული ქირურგიული მკურნალობა და რეკონსტრუქცია, ყველაზე ხშირად იყენებდნენ გულმკერდის ძირითადი ფლაპის რეკონსტრუქციას. შეფასებული იყო ჰოსპიტალიზაციის ხანგრძლივობა, 30-დღიანი და 1-წლიანი სიკვდილიანობის მაჩვენებელი და ინფექციის რეციდივი.

შედეგები.

DSWI-ის სიხშირე გულის ოპერაციის შემდეგ იყო 1.5%. Staphylococcus spp. იყო ყველაზე ხშირად იზოლირებული პათოგენი. მედიანური მკურნალობის შეფერხება საავადმყოფოში 1-ში პაციენტებისთვის იყო 1 დღე [IQR: 1-2], შედარებით 13 დღე [IQR: 8-24] 2 საავადმყოფოში. საჭიროებს ფლაპის რეკონსტრუქციას. საავადმყოფო 1-ში, ოპერატიულმა ქირურგიულმა ჩარევამ შესაძლებელი გახადა მკერდის ძვლის მნიშვნელოვანი ნაწილის შენარჩუნება, ხოლო NPWT ხელს უწყობს მწვავე ანთების სწრაფ კონტროლს. მკერდის რეკონსტრუქცია ძირითადად მოიცავდა ხელახლა გაყვანილობას, რამაც აღადგინა გულმკერდის სტაბილურობა. ჰოსპიტალიზაციის საშუალო ხანგრძლივობა იყო 25 დღე [IQR: 16-30] საავადმყოფო 1-ში და 22 დღე [IQR: 16-29] მე-2 საავადმყოფოში. 30-დღიანი სიკვდილიანობის მაჩვენებელი იყო 5% 1 საავადმყოფოში და 6% საავადმყოფო 2-ში. 1 წლის სიკვდილიანობა 10.5% და 4.3% შესაბამისად. ინფექციის რეციდივების სიხშირე იყო 15% საავადმყოფოში 1 და 24% საავადმყოფოში 2.

დასკვნები.

ქირურგიული მოცილების დრო გადაწყვეტია DSWI-ს მართვისთვის. როდესაც საკმარისია სტერნის ქსოვილი შენარჩუნებული, ხელახალი გაყვანილობა სიცოცხლისუნარიანი ვარიანტია. ფლაპის რეკონსტრუქცია ეფექტურია, განსაკუთრებით იმ შემთხვევებში, რომლებიც მოიცავს ძვლის ფართო განადგურებას.

საკვანძო სიტყვები: მუცლის ღრმა ჭრილობის ინფექცია, ოსტეომიელიტი, სტერნის რეკონსტრუქცია, ნეგატიური წნევის ჭრილობის თერაპია.