

## PRIMARY REPAIR OF PROXIMAL (GRADE IV) HYPOSPADIAS UTILIZING TUNICA VAGINALIS VASCULARISED FLAP

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### ABSTRACT

**Background:** Proximal (grade IV) hypospadias like scrotal and perineal are considered as severe challenging types for surgeons, problematic for the patients and their families, More than three hundreds surgical techniques were used to manage different type of hypospadias. Most of them associated with high incidence of complications. These complications are much more common in the proximal types as in our study. Post-operative fistula formation is expected complications. Utilising the tunica vaginalis as an additional layer during repair may prevent such complications. In this study we evaluated the benefits of using the tunica vaginalis flap as a supportive layer in the primary repair. Most related literatures about this subject used this technique after surgery to manage cases with post-operative fistulas. In the contrary we used this technique during the formal surgery to cover the new urethra to prevent fistula formation not after surgery.

**Aims of the study:** A retrospective study, on fourteen patients with severe hypospadias (Proximal types), to evaluate the role of tunica vaginalis flap in the primary repair of the hypospadias.

**Patients and Methods:** Between January 2016 and January 2024, fourteen children with Grade IV hypospadias were operated on. Only severe cases were treated with this method other simpler and more common cases were treated by different surgeries like Snodgrass technique. The age range was 2 to 16 years. All of them had 2 staged repair the first stage was correcting the chordae by incising the urethral plate excising the fibrous chordae tissues then covering the bare shaft with dorsal flaps. The tunica flap was used in the second stage which was done 6 to 12 months later. Folly's catheter was used for ten to fourteen days after surgery. And the patients were followed for a variable time 3months to 2 years period for the development of complications like fistula formation or stricture. Cosmetic considerations were also noted.

**Results:** All the fourteen patients had proximal types (Grade IV) hypospadias. After surgery all patients had a good cosmetic outcome no fistula formation two had mild distal urethral stricture cured after few urethral dilatation. No post-operative penile torsion was noted. Two patients developed local infection treated conservatively. One patient had partial glanular dehiscence at the distal end which had no clinical significance. One patient complained from on and off penile cutaneous swelling lasted 3 weeks.

**Conclusions:** Using tunica vaginalis vascularised flap to cover the new urethra in severe proximal hypospadias during the second stage seems to be a successful way in preventing fistula formation without increasing the patient's morbidity.

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**Keywords:** Proximal hypospadias; Two stages surgery; Tunica vaginalis flap.

**H**ypospadias is a rather common pediatric surgical problem with incidence of 1 per 300 newborn<sup>1</sup>. distal types like glanular and distal shaft are more

common but may be easier to treat. Proximal types like scrotal although less common 10 %. They are more difficult to treat and have more post-operative

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complications. Currently, primary hypospadias is classified into four grades, grade 4 is the most difficult to treat (Fig. 4). Historically too many methods had been used to correct severe types. None of them is considered the golden standard in achieving the optimum goals and preventing complication. Generally distal types are being managed by tubularised incised plate (TIP)<sup>2</sup>. While the treatment of proximal types with chordee is more controversial some surgeons use TIP<sup>3</sup>. Others prefer two staged repair<sup>4,5</sup>. To decrease the incidence of complications especially fistula formations some authors prefer to use an additional covering layer before skin closure. One of these methods is utilising the tunica vaginalis as a protective layer. Reviewing the related literature we found that using the tunica was in different ways. Some authors used it after surgery of proximal hypospadias to close the urethrocutaneous fistula<sup>6</sup>. Others used it with tubularized incised plate (TIP) method either during surgery as a supporting layer<sup>7</sup>. Or After TIP to close the fistulae<sup>8</sup>.

A group of authors also published papers studying the benefits and problems of using the flap as an additional step in the management of mixed groups of hypospadias patient (proximal and distal type)<sup>9,10</sup>.

In this study we used the tunica vaginalis flap as a supportive layer during the formal surgical repair for severe types only (proximal types), selectively in patients who had 2 staged repair. Trying to identify the protective benefits against the formation of post-operative fistula and other problems related to this technique.

#### **PATIENTS AND METHODS:**

Between January 2016 and January 2024, fourteen children with proximal type hypospadias (Grade IV) were operated on, Figure 1 illustrate the classification<sup>11</sup>. Surgeries were performed at the pediatric surgery centre in Duhok city. Informed consents were signed by the patients' caregivers (usually the parents) according

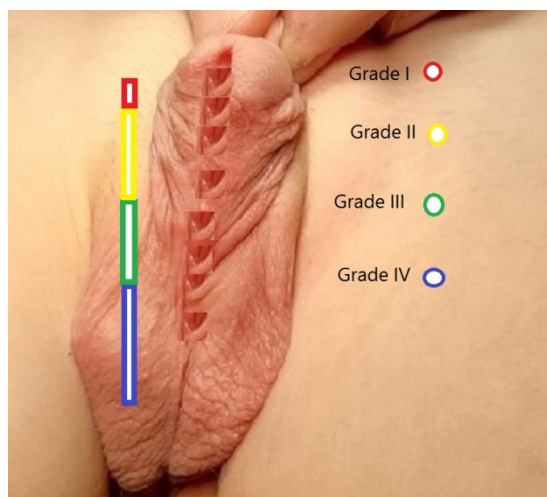
to the hospital regulations. Only severe cases were treated with this method other simpler and more common cases were treated by different surgeries (Snodgrass technique). Proximal types with single stage repair were also excluded from the study. Boys with bilateral undescended testes were also excluded from the study. The patients had their hypospadiac opening at the vicinity of the scrotum (11 scrotal and three penoscrotal type). Seven patients had received pre-operative testosterone.

**Table 1: patients' characteristics**

Variables	
Total number	
Age at the time of surgery	1-3 years
	3-5 years
	> 5 years
Grade of the hypospadias	Grade 4:
	Scrotal penoscrotal
Preoperative testosterone therapy	Received
	Not received
Number of stages of surgery	Single
	Two stages

All of them had 2 staged repair the first stage was correcting the chordae by incising the urethral plate then covering the bare shaft with dorsal flaps. Surgery time for first operation took 60 to 80 minutes while the second surgery took 2 to 3 hours. The tunica flap was used in the second stage which was done 6 to 12 months later. The neo urethra was created by tubularising the local skin flaps, and then a second layer added from the surrounding tissues. Haemostasis was achieved by local diluted adrenaline injection and bipolar electrocautery. The edge of the wound elevated toward the scrotum subcutaneous tunnel created. Tunica vaginalis vascularised flap then created from one side left or right tunica figure2. The flap length should be suitable to the length of the stretched penis and the width is about 10 mm. Blood supply should be meticulously preserved to prevent flap ischemia. The flap

then passed under the skin toward the ventral penile site and used to cover the neo urethra (figure3). The cremasteric muscles were not excluded from the flap. The skin closed over the flaps (figure4). Folly's catheter was used for ten to fourteen days after surgery. And the patients were followed as outpatients for a variable time 3months to 2 years period for the development of complications like fistula formation or stricture. Cosmetic considerations were also noted. The site of operation examined for infection dehiscence fistula formation chordee and the urethra was calibrated by metallic dilators to all cases. Urethroscopy was done in 3 patients to exclude strictures and diverticula.

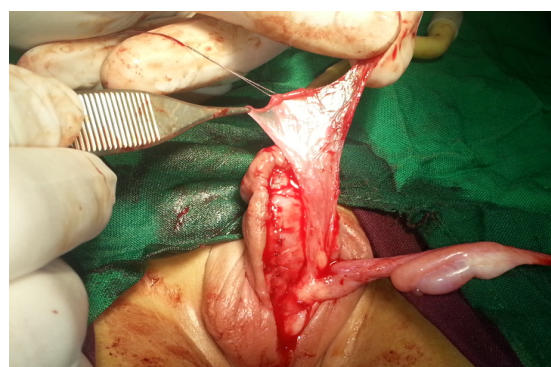


**Figure 1**

Classification of Hypospadias to 4 grades:  
 Grade I (glanular) hypospadias,  
 Grade II (distal) the meatus in the distal half of the penis with or without superficial chordee.  
 Grade III (proximal) the meatus in the proximal half of the penis with or without superficial chordee.  
 Grade IV or (perineal) (the meatus proximal to the penoscrotal junction, usually with severe chordee that necessitates division of the urethral plate, usually with small glans).



**Figure 2**



**Figure 3**



**Figure 4**



## RESULTS:

The total number of patients is fourteen. The patients' age range was 2 to 16 years at the time of the second stage. All the patients had proximal types hypospadias at the vicinity of the scrotum grade IV (at or proximal to the penoscrotal junction) figure (5) associated with variable degrees of chordae. All patients had the same types of 1st and 2nd surgery. After surgery all patients had good cosmetic outcome. No fistula formation was recorded, two had distal mild urethral stricture responded well to dilatation with urethroscopy 2 to 3 sessions. No post-operative penile torsion was noted. Two patients developed local infection cutaneous infection and urethritis, they complaint of discharging purulent drops of urine after penile squeezing (retrograde urethrogram and later urethroscopy was done to exclude diverticulum or stricture and was normal) treated conservatively. One patient had partial glanular dehiscence at the distal end which had no clinical or cosmetic significance. One patient complained from on and off penile cutaneous swelling with dysuria lasted 3 weeks. Table 2 shows the post-operative results

**Table 2 post-operative results**

Variables	Number of patients
Fistula formation	0
Strictures:	
Distal	2
Long	0
Penile torsion	0
Glanular dehiscence	
Partial	1
complete	0
Wound infection	2
Penile cutaneous swelling	1
Urethroscopy needed after surgery	3



**Figure 5**

## DISCUSSION:

Historically a lot of procedures were described to manage different types of hypospadias the selection of the suitable surgery depends on many factors including the site of the meatus, the presence of chordee, the state of the urethral plate etc. But surgeon preference plays an important role in the management. However during the last few decades the picture is becoming clearer. As Snodgrass technique becoming more popular for distal and mid shaft hypospadias, with increasing success<sup>2</sup>. Two staged repair is suitable for severe proximal types<sup>5,9</sup>. However, post-operative complications are still of a major concern both for the surgeon and the family. Urethrocutaneous fistula is the most common complication after surgery. Especially those with proximal types. To decrease the incidence of fistulas a lot of procedures were published. Among these techniques is the use of tunica vaginalis flap. We used the tunica flap in combination with the second stage surgery as part of the procedure to prevent the fistula formation. Not after surgery to treat fistula. Some surgeons used this flap after surgery to treat fistula. As redo operations for hypospadias complication carry much higher incidence of problems<sup>5</sup>. We thing

that using the flap as a preventive measure at the 1ry surgery better than using it after surgery for managing complications avoiding the need of another annoying surgery. Snow et al. also recommended the preventive use of the tunica flap during primary hypospadias repair, they reported urethrocutaneous fistula rate of 9%, but unlike us they use it for several types of hypospadias (not only proximal types)<sup>10</sup>. Other surgeons used it in combination with Snodgrass technique<sup>12</sup>. We used it only for proximal hypospadias namely scrotal and penoscrotal types who needed two staged repair. As our patients with distal hypospadias were treated by Snodgrass as we've reported in our previous study<sup>13</sup>. Because of the low incidence of fistula formation in Snodgrass technique we think that it is not necessary to use the tunica flaps for patients treated by Snodgrass method<sup>2</sup>. The penis or phallus can be described as micropenis or, Microphallus, when the stretched length is less than 2.5 standard deviations (SDs) below the normal mean for age. The term micropenis refers to normally formed penis, while microphallus is the term used for cases with hypospadias<sup>14</sup>.

Micropenis can be treated by testosterone. Usually 1 to 2 courses using 3 doses of intramuscular testosterone (25-50mg) given at one month intervals<sup>15</sup>. We use pre-operative testosterone therapy with seven of our patients. Two had microphallus the stretched penile length was less than lower limit for age, the others had narrow glanular width. Given local dihydrotestosterone 2.5% gel for one to two months. Or a course of intramuscular 25mg testosterone enanthate monthly for 3 months. Glans width is usually reduced in patients with high grade hypospadias compared the control group of same age<sup>16,17</sup>.

We did not use hormonal therapy routinely for all patients. Literature does not support that with high level evidence<sup>18,19,20</sup>.

Studying fourteen patients might not be enough to evaluate the technique but it give

a strong idea about its benefits. The reason behind the small number is that we've excluded many patients for example distal types (which are much more common) or proximal hypospadias with single stage. As we think that studying this technique on single type of hypospadias will be more valid in assessing the benefits and problems. So we selected only severe (proximal) types for the study. However other researchers reported the utilization of tunica flap on different types of hypospadias and their results were also encouraging<sup>7</sup>.

Researchers have reported many types of complications following the repair of scrotal hypospadias like complete failure or dehiscence of the repair, stricture, chordee, and more commonly urethrocutaneous fistula with incidence reaching to 5%. One way to reduce the incidence of these complications is the use of tunica vaginalis protective flap which a lot of surgeons claims its efficacy in preventing fistula formation<sup>21</sup>.

Regarding our patients no fistula formation was reported nor complete dehiscence. Penile torsion was not noticed in this study although.

We did not deliberately exclude the spermatic muscle from the tunical flap some literature report it<sup>22</sup>.

Literature published incidence of urethral stricture after hypospadias repair in children about 6.5%<sup>23</sup>. long term urethral strictures were not reported in this study, only noticed temporally in 2 cases that responded well to urethroscopy and dilatation. No history of weak stream. All the new urethras were calibrated by metallic dilators. Retrograde Urethrography was done to one patient who complained of discharging a gush of small amount of purulent urine after squeezing or milking the penis 2 weeks after surgery (as if small amount of urine retained in the urethra after micturition) and no diverticulum or stricture was found. And his condition was cured after 3 weeks.

Some surgeons used the tunica vaginalis as a free graft<sup>24</sup>. We think that using a vascularised flap is more reasonable to assure a good blood supply and because of the proximity and easiness of transferring the flap not necessitating a free graft.

## CONCLUSIONS

Using tunica vaginalis vascularised flap to cover the new urethra in proximal hypospadias during the second stage seems to be a successful way in preventing fistula formation and dehiscence without increasing the patient's morbidity.

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## پوخته

## چاکر دنده‌وی سهره‌تایی هیپوسپادیاکانی نزیک (پولی IV) به به‌کار هیئانی تونیکا قاجینالیس فاسکولاریس

**پیشینه:** هیپوسپادیا نزیکه‌کان (پولی IV) وه‌کو سکرۆتال و پهرینیا و هک جوره چالاکه تونده‌کان بۆ پزیشکانی نه‌شته‌رگهری داده‌نریت، کیش‌ده‌اره بۆ نه‌خۆشه‌کان و خیزانه‌کانیان، زیاتر له سێ سه‌ده ته‌کنیکه‌کانی نه‌شته‌رگهری به‌کار هیئران بۆ به‌ریوهردنی جۆری جیاوازی هاپیوسپادیا. زۆربه‌یان په‌یوه‌ندیان به‌ ریزه‌ی به‌رزی ئالۆزییه‌کانه‌وه هه‌یه. ئهم ئالۆزیانه زۆر زیاتر له جۆره‌کانی نزیکدا وه‌ک له توێژینه‌وه‌که‌ماندا باون. دروستبوونی فیستولا دوا‌ی نه‌شته‌رگهری ئالۆزییه‌ چاوه‌روان‌کر وه‌کانه. به‌کار هیئانی تونیکا قاجینالیس وه‌ک چینیکی زیاده له کاتی چاک‌کردنه‌وه‌دا رهنگه‌ریگری بکات له‌و جوره ئالۆزیانه. له‌م لیکۆلینه‌وه‌یه‌دا ئیمه سووده‌کانی به‌کار هیئانی په‌نجه‌ی تونیکا قاجینالیسمان وه‌ک چینیکی پالپشت له‌ چاک‌کردنه‌وه‌ی سهره‌تاییدا هه‌لسه‌نگاند. زۆربه‌ی ئه‌ده‌بیاته په‌یوه‌ندی‌داره‌کان سه‌باره‌ت به‌م باب‌ه‌ته ئهم ته‌کنیکه‌یان به‌کار هیئانه‌وه دوا‌ی نه‌شته‌رگهری بۆ به‌ریوهردنی حاله‌ته‌کانی تووشبوو به‌ فیستولی دوا‌ی نه‌شته‌رگهری. به‌ پێچه‌وانه‌وه ئیمه ئهم ته‌کنیکه‌مان له‌ کاتی نه‌شته‌رگهری فاسکولاریس به‌کار هیئانه‌وه داپۆشینی میز‌لانی نوێ بۆ ریزگریکردن له‌ دروستبوونی فیستولا نه‌ک دوا‌ی نه‌شته‌رگهری.

**نامانجه‌کانی توێژینه‌وه‌که:** توێژینه‌وه‌یه‌کی پاشگه‌زبوونه‌وه‌ی، له‌سه‌ر چواره‌ نه‌خۆش که‌ تووشی هاپیوسپادیا‌یه‌کی توند بوون (جۆره‌کانی نزیک)، بۆ هه‌لسه‌نگاندنی رۆلی په‌نجه‌ی تونیکا قاجینالیس له‌ چاک‌کردنه‌وه‌ی سهره‌تایی هیپوسپادیا‌دا.

نه‌خۆش و شێواز مه‌کان: له‌ نێوان ژانویه‌ی ۲۰۱۶ و ژانویه‌ی ۲۰۲۴، چواره‌ مندا‌لی تووشبوو به‌ پولی چواره‌می هیپوسپادیا نه‌شته‌رگهری بۆ کراوه. ته‌نها حاله‌ته‌ تونده‌کان به‌م شێوازه چاره‌سه‌ر کران. حاله‌ته‌کانی تری ساده‌تر و باوتر به‌ نه‌شته‌رگهری جیاوازی وه‌ک ته‌کنیکی سنۆدگراس چاره‌سه‌ر کران. مه‌ودای ته‌مه‌نی ۲ بۆ ۱۶ سال بووه. هه‌موویان 2 قونا‌غی چاک‌کردنه‌وه‌یان هه‌بوو قونا‌غی یه‌که‌م راست‌کردنه‌وه‌ی کۆرده‌مه‌کان بوو به‌ برینی پلاکی میز‌لانی که‌ شانه‌کانی کۆرده‌ ریش‌الیه‌کان ده‌بریه‌وه پاشان شه‌فتی روت به‌ په‌نجه‌ی پشته‌وه‌ داپۆشی. له‌ قونا‌غی دووهمدا په‌نجه‌ی تونیکا به‌کارهات که‌ دوا‌ی ۶ بۆ ۱۲ مانگ ئه‌نجام‌درا. کاتته‌ره‌که‌ی قۆلی بۆ ماوه‌ی ده‌ بۆ چواره‌ رۆژ دوا‌ی نه‌شته‌رگهری به‌کار هیئرا. وه‌ نه‌خۆشه‌کان بۆ ماوه‌یه‌کی گۆراو به‌ودا‌چوونیان بۆ کرا له‌ ماوه‌ی ۳ مانگ بۆ ۲ سال بۆ گه‌شه‌کردنی ئالۆزییه‌کانی وه‌ک دروستبوونی فیستولا یان توندبوونه‌وه. هه‌روه‌ها رچه‌او‌کردنی جوان‌کاریش ئاماژه‌ی پێکرا.

**ده‌ره‌نجامه‌کان:** هه‌ر چواره‌ نه‌خۆشه‌که‌ جۆری نزیک (پولی IV) ی هاپیوسپادیا‌یان هه‌بوو. دوا‌ی نه‌شته‌رگهری هه‌موو نه‌خۆشه‌کان ده‌ره‌نجامی‌کی جوان‌کاری باشیان هه‌بوو هیچ فیستولا‌یه‌کیان نه‌بوو دوو که‌سیان توندبوونه‌وه‌ی سوکی دووری میز‌لانیان هه‌بوو دوا‌ی که‌م فراوان‌بوونی میز‌لانی چاک بووه‌وه. هیچ پێچانی ئه‌ندامی نێرینه‌ له‌ دوا‌ی نه‌شته‌رگهری تێبینی نه‌کرا. دوو نه‌خۆش تووشی هه‌وکردنی ناخۆیی بوون که‌ به‌ شێوه‌یه‌کی کۆنه‌په‌رستانه چاره‌سه‌ر کران. نه‌خۆشیک له‌ کۆتایی دووردا برینی به‌شه‌کی گلانه‌کانی هه‌بوو که‌ هیچ گرنگییه‌کی کلینیکی نه‌بوو. نه‌خۆشیک سکالای له‌سه‌ر و ده‌ره‌وه‌ی ئه‌ندامی نێرینه هه‌بوو ئاوسانی پێستی ئه‌ندامی نێرینه ۳ هه‌فته‌ی خایاند.

**ده‌ره‌نجامه‌کان:** به‌کار هیئانی په‌نجه‌ی بۆرییه‌کانی زێی تونیکا بۆ داپۆشینی میز‌لانی نوێ له‌ هیپوسپادیا تونده‌کانی نزیک له‌ قونا‌غی دووهمدا پێده‌چیت ریزگرییه‌کی سه‌رکه‌وتوو بێت له‌ ریزگریکردن له‌ دروستبوونی فیستولا به‌بێ زیاد‌کردنی نه‌خۆشی نه‌خۆشه‌که.



## الخلاصة

### الإصلاح الأولي للمبال التحتاني القريبة (الدرجة الرابعة) باستخدام الغلالة المهبلية الوعائية

**الخلفية:** تعتبر المبال التحتاني القريبة (الدرجة الرابعة) مثل الصفن والعجان من الأنواع الصعبة للغاية بالنسبة للجراحين، وتشكل مشكلة للمرضى وعائلاتهم، وتم استخدام أكثر من ثلاثمائة تقنية جراحية لإدارة أنواع مختلفة من المبال التحتاني. ويرتبط معظمها بارتفاع معدل حدوث المضاعفات. هذه المضاعفات أكثر شيوعاً في الأنواع القريبة كما في دراستنا. ومن المتوقع أن يكون تشكيل الناسور بعد العملية الجراحية مضاعفات. إن استخدام الغلالة المهبلية كطبقة إضافية أثناء الإصلاح قد يمنع مثل هذه المضاعفات. قمنا في هذه الدراسة بتقييم فوائد استخدام سديلة الغلالة المهبلية كطبقة داعمة في عملية الإصلاح الأولية. استخدمت معظم الأدبيات ذات الصلة بهذا الموضوع هذه التقنية بعد الجراحة لإدارة حالات الناسور بعد العملية الجراحية. على العكس من ذلك، استخدمنا هذه التقنية أثناء الجراحة الرسمية لتغطية مجرى البول الجديد لمنع تكوين الناسور وليس بعد الجراحة.

**أهداف الدراسة:** دراسة استرجاعية، على أربعة عشر مريضاً يعانون من المبال التحتاني الشديد (الأنواع القريبة)، لتقييم دور سديلة الغلالة المهبلية في الإصلاح الأولي للمبال التحتاني.

**المرضى والطرق:** في الفترة ما بين يناير 2016 ويناير 2024، تم إجراء عملية جراحية لأربعة عشر طفلاً مصابين بالمبال التحتاني من الدرجة الرابعة. تم علاج الحالات الشديدة فقط بهذه الطريقة، أما الحالات الأبسط والأكثر شيوعاً فقد تم علاجها بعمليات جراحية مختلفة مثل تقنية سنودجراس. وكانت الفئة العمرية من 2 إلى 16 سنة. خضعوا جميعاً لعملية إصلاح على مرحلتين، وكانت المرحلة الأولى هي تصحيح الحبال عن طريق شق لوحة مجرى البول واستئصال أنسجة الحبال الليفية ثم تغطية العمود العاري باللوحات الطهرية. تم استخدام رفرف الغلالة في المرحلة الثانية والتي تم إجراؤها بعد 6 إلى 12 شهراً. تم استخدام قسطرة فولبي لمدة عشرة إلى أربعة عشر يوماً بعد الجراحة. وتمت متابعة المرضى لفترة زمنية متغيرة تتراوح بين 3 أشهر إلى سنتين لتطور المضاعفات مثل تكوين الناسور أو التضيق. ولوحظت أيضاً الاعتبارات التجميلية.

**النتائج:** جميع المرضى الأربعة عشر لديهم أنواع قريبة من المبال التحتاني (الدرجة الرابعة). بعد الجراحة، حصل جميع المرضى على نتائج تجميلية جيدة ولم يتشكل ناسور، وكان اثنان منهم يعانون من تضيق بسيط في الإحليل البعيد بعد قليل من توسع مجرى البول. ولم يلاحظ أي التواء القضيب بعد العملية الجراحية. طور اثنان من المرضى عدوى محلية تم علاجها بشكل متحفظ. كان أحد المرضى يعاني من تقعر حشفاً جزئياً في الطرف البعيد ولم يكن له أي أهمية سريرية. اشتكى أحد المرضى من تورم جلدي في القضيب استمر لمدة 3 أسابيع.

**الاستنتاجات:** يبدو أن استخدام سديلة الغلالة المهبلية الوعائية لتغطية مجرى البول الجديد في حالات المبال التحتاني القريبة الشديدة خلال المرحلة الثانية هو وسيلة ناجحة في منع تكوين الناسور دون زيادة مرارة المريض.