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Perioperative Risk Assessment and Targeted Optimization Strategies for High-Risk Surgical Patients: An Evidence-Based Multidisciplinary Approach

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***Abstract*— Postoperative morbidity, mortality, and clinical resource consumption of high-risk surgical patients disproportionately which is occurring despite improved surgical and perioperative care. Timely optimization and correct perioperative risk assessment continue to be the focus in enhancing surgical outcomes especially in elderly persons, patients with multiple comorbidities, and persons undergoing major or emergency procedures. The article is a critical review of the modern models of high-risk surgical patients identification, which combine clinical assessment with physiological assessment, risk stratification instruments, and procedure-related variables. The focus is made on the adjustable risk factors and the designed optimization strategies over the entire preoperative, intraoperative and postoperative periods. Based on the literature on anesthesiology, critical care, geriatric medicine and perioperative monitoring, the significance of multidisciplinary collaboration, personalized care planning, and goal-directed management is synthesized. Such emerging trends as improved recovery routes, improved monitoring, and digital health innovations are mentioned within the framework of perioperative risk mitigation. The article concludes that the systematic risk evaluation and the specific optimization can greatly decrease complications, enhance functional recovery, and patient safety in high-risk surgical groups.**

***Keywords*— Perioperative risk assessment; High-risk surgical patients; Preoperative optimization; Perioperative monitoring; Surgical outcomes; Multidisciplinary care**

I. Introduction

Global surgical burden is ever-growing owing to aging of the population, epidemiological changes in favor of chronic diseases and amplified access to surgical care. These trends have been associated with an increase in the percentage of high-risk surgical patients. Though these patients comprise a minority of the surgical patients, they are the ones who have a disproportionate contribution to postoperative complications, increased hospital stay, intensive care, and death (Girbes, 2000; Kehlet and Mythen, 2011).

Nonparity of outcomes was marked in previous studies of perioperative research which demonstrated that the traditional perioperative pathways do not effectively meet the complex physiological and psychosocial needs of this group (Davies & Wilson, 2004; Tote & Grounds, 2006). Perioperative risk assessment has been considered traditionally based on the forecasting of undesirable outcomes, which is mostly aimed at anesthetic planning and informed consent. Nevertheless, modern perioperative medicine has a larger purpose: to determine the risk factors that can be modified and apply specific optimization methods to enhance the ability to resist the stress of the surgery (Pearse et al., 2004; Martindale & Deveney, 2013). This change indicates increased awareness of the fact that operative outcomes are not solely dependent on the methods of operation, but also on the health condition preoperative, intraoperative physiological control, postoperative follow-up, and aspects at the system level. Along with biomedical determinants, the impact of psychosocial stress, health literacy, patient engagement, and healthcare delivery models on clinical outcomes is highlighted in research in the field of public health (Ashifa, 20192022), mental health (Vettriselvan et al., 20182026), occupational health (Swadhi et al., 20252026), and digital health (Swadhi et al., 20252026). The combination of these views into the perioperative care is especially applicable to the high-risk population of surgical individuals. The article is a multidisciplinary review of the evidence-based perioperative risk assessment and optimization in high-risk surgical patients and the synthesis of evidence in the field of anesthesiology, surgery, critical care, geriatric medicine, and other related areas.

II. Identification Of The High-Risk Surgical Patient

The definition of the high-risk surgical patient is still a difficult subject because patient characteristics, the surgical procedure, and the healthcare setting are heterogeneous.

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The conventional definitions focus on old age, comorbidity, and urgency or complexity of surgery (Sonwalkar and Wilson, 2005; Nicholas, 2014). Although these factors are still significant, they do not sufficiently describe the multidimensionality of the perioperative vulnerability. Modern theories define risk as the connection between patient-associated, procedure-associated, and system-associated determinants (Rovati et al., 2023; Schmidt and Stefani, 2022). The patient-related factors are chronic cardiovascular, respiratory, renal, metabolic, and neurological diseases, anemia, malnutrition, and decreased functional capacity (Davies and Wilson, 2004; Martindale and Deveney, 2013). Frailty, which is a reduced physiological reserve and sensitivity to stressors, has become a potent predictor of postoperative complications and death, regardless of chronological age (Nicholas, 2014; Mirrakhimov, 2026). Perioperative risk is also subject to psychological and social determinants. The consequences of chronic stress, anxiety, depression, and the lack of social support have a negative impact on immune performance, pain management, treatment compliance, and the progression of the recovery process (Ranganathan et al., 2024; Zahoor et al., 2025). Patient engagement and health literacy have an effect on the effectiveness of perioperative education and optimization strategies (Elkin et al., 2025). Patient vulnerability, factors related to the procedure, such as, but not limited to, the magnitude, duration, expected blood loss, and emergency, significantly contribute to increasing risk (Pearse et al., 2004; Aseni et al., 2019). The results are also influenced by system-level aspects like the accessibility of state-of-the-art monitoring, critical care facilities, and multidisciplinary teams (Girbes, 2000; Kehlet and Mythen, 2011).

III. Perioperative Risk Assessment Frameworks

Perioperative risk assessment is a process that is structured, iterative and aimed at estimating the possibility of adverse outcomes in combination with the guidance of specific intervention (Minto and Biccard, 2014; Adeleke et al., 2021). It starts with extensive clinical assessment that entails medical history, physical examination, medication history, and previous surgeries and anesthetic experiences (Davies and Wilson, 2004). Risk stratification tools and scoring systems offer uniform methods of estimating perioperative risk and allow communication between clinicians and with patients (Boehm et al., 2016; Sherrer et al., 2022). Although clinical judgment and structured assessments cannot be used universally, a combination of the two enhances more predictive accuracy.

Risk assessment, especially the exercise tolerance, is still fundamentally based on the functional capacity assessment. Bad functional status is associated with poor outcomes and it is prone to cardiopulmonary constraints (Nicholas, 2014). Geriatric assessment (cognition, mobility, nutrition, and social support) is prognostic in geriatric patients (Mirrakhimov, 2026). The unique populations should be assessed using different methods. Pediatrics represent a specific anatomical, physiological, and developmental group of patients, and perioperative respiratory adverse events constitute one of the leading areas of risks (Hii et al., 2022). Mental health status, perceptions about stress, and coping ability affect the outcomes of perioperative practices across age groups and must be considered in assessment frameworks (Elkin et al., 2025; Zahoor et al., 2025).

Table 1.
Determinants of Perioperative Risk in High-Risk Surgical Patients

Risk Domain	Key Components	Evidence
Patient-related	Age, comorbidities, frailty, anemia, malnutrition	Davies & Wilson (2004); Nicholas (2014); Martindale & Deveney (2013)
Functional & psychosocial	Poor exercise tolerance, chronic stress, mental health status	Sherrer et al. (2022); Ranganathan et al. (2024); Elkin et al. (2025)
Surgical	Major or emergency surgery, prolonged duration	Pearse et al. (2004); Aseni et al. (2019)
System-level	Limited monitoring, delayed escalation, fragmented care	Girbes (2000); Kehlet & Mythen (2011)

The objective of preoperative optimization is to achieve an increase in physiological resilience, as well as a decrease in modifiable risk before surgical stress (Tote & Grounds, 2006; Sonwalkar & Wilson, 2005). Cardiovascular optimization is aimed at the management of hypertension, ischemic heart disease, heart failure, and arrhythmias, which will decrease perioperative cardiac events (Davies and Wilson, 2004; Boehm et al., 2016). Pulmonary optimization involves smoking cessation, bronchodilator therapy, respiratory physiotherapy and anti-infective therapy especially to chronic lung disease patients (Davies and Wilson, 2004). Optimal nutrition plays a vital role since malnutrition is highly related to delayed wound healing time, infections, and a lengthy hospital stay (Martindale and Deveney, 2013).

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Preoperative anemia elevates the need of transfusion and is something that is independently related with adverse outcomes; early detection and intervention enhances the safety during perioperative (Sherrer et al., 2022). Psychological preparation and patient education increase adherence, anxiety, and recovery. Health promotion and patient engagement research findings indicate that patients should be empowered by means of education and shared decision-making (Vettriselvan et al., 2025; Swadhi et al., 2025). Digital platforms, artificial intelligence and predictive analytics can assist clinicians more and more in determining high-risk profiles and optimization strategies (Devi et al., 2025; Catherine et al., 2025; Shanthi et al., 2025).

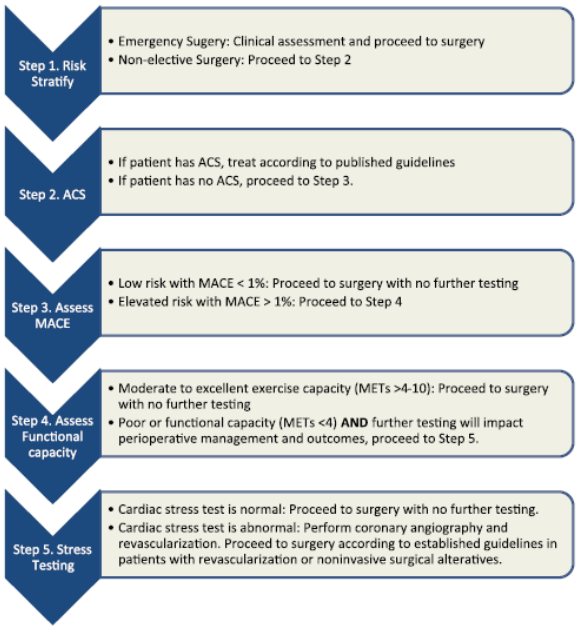

Figure 1 Perioperative Risk Assessment & Optimization Framework

Combined perioperative risk analysis and optimization model that demonstrates the linear process of continuous enhancement of the chain between preoperative testing (risk stratification, comorbidity optimization, nutritional and psychological preparation) and intraoperative (goal-directed therapy, advanced monitoring, physiological stabilisation) and postoperative (early mobilisation, surveillance, complication prevention) recovery. The model focuses on multidisciplinary teamwork and active reevaluation in an attempt to maximise the outcomes of high-risk surgical patients.

IV. Mitigation And Monitoring Of Risk Intraoperative

Intraoperative management is crucial in converting preoperative optimization to better results. Individualization of the anesthetic methods should be done to reduce hemodynamic instability, hypoxia, hypothermia, and metabolic stress (Pearse et al., 2004; Kehlet and Mythen, 2011). High-risk surgery has seen the popularity of advanced perioperative monitoring. Cardiovascular and respiratory parameters would be assessed continuously, which will allow identifying the instability early and provide purposeful therapy to optimize tissue perfusion/oxygen delivery (Aseni et al., 2019; Tote & Grounds, 2006). It has been shown that customized fluid management decreases complications and hospital stay. Another case when respiratory protection strategies are especially significant is patients with underlying lung disease and pediatric anesthesia, where airways and respiratory adverse events are frequent (Hii et al., 2022). Intraoperative care should also include monitoring of temperature, blood preservation and prevention of infection (Girbes, 2000).

V. Optimization, After-Surgery Care

Postoperative period is a critical period where most of the complications will be detected. The methods such as improved surveillance, prompt mobilization, pain management, and orderly postoperative decision-making pathways are beneficial to high-risk patients (Pearse et al., 2004; Kehlet and Mythen, 2011). High-dependency/intensive care unit admission might be required after the major surgery or intraoperative instability (Aseni et al., 2019). Enhanced Recovery After Surgery guidelines focus on the application of multimodal interventions that optimize the prevention of complications and the development of functional recovery (Martindale & Deveney, 2013). Postoperative recovery is largely affected by mental health, stress, and social support. The necessity to focus on the psychological health of the population, especially with vulnerable groups, is supported by the evidence provided by the public health and mental health studies (Ashifa, 20192022; Ranganathan et al., 2024; Zahoor et al., 2025). The interrelatedness of physical, psychological, and social determinants of health is further strengthened by occupational and community health investigations (Vettriselvan et al., 20182026).

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Table 2.
Evidence-Based Optimization Strategies Across the Perioperative Continuum

Phase	Strategy	Supporting Evidence
Preoperative	Comorbidity control, nutrition, anemia correction, education	Davies & Wilson (2004); Martindale & Deveney (2013); Sherrer et al. (2022)
Intraoperative	Goal-directed therapy, advanced monitoring	Tote & Grounds (2006); Aseni et al. (2019)
Postoperative	Enhanced recovery pathways, early mobilization, psychosocial support	Pearse et al. (2004); Kehlet & Mythen (2011); Elkin et al. (2025)

VI. Emerging Perspectives And Future Directions

Risk management in the perioperative period is undergoing technological change. Digital health platforms, machine learning, and artificial intelligence have the potential to improve risk stratification, decision support and patient engagement (Devi et al., 2025; Catherine et al., 2025; Swadhi et al., 2025). These tools are used to supplement the traditional clinical assessment and they can make high-risk care more consistent and efficient. Future studies need to be on the built-in risk models that consider physiological, psychosocial, and system-wide factors, especially in the aging and resource-constrained context (Rovati et al., 2023; Mirrakhimov, 2026). Enhancement of multidisciplinary frameworks of perioperative medicine is still crucial in the response to an increasingly complex surgical population.

VII. Conclusion

The key factor to the enhancement of the outcome in high-risk surgical patients lies in the use of perioperative risk assessment and optimization. It has always been proven that the systematic detection of vulnerability can result in complication reduction and increased recovery with the help of a specific, multidisciplinary approach to optimization. Increasingly complex and older surgical populations will necessitate the combination of biomedical, psychosocial, and technological strategies to achieve the future of perioperative safety, care quality, and patient outcomes.

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