

LEONOR ALVES LIMA

**Performance of the Parasympathetic Tone Activity
(PTA) Index to Assess the Intraoperative Nociception
in Cats**

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Universidade Lusófona – Centro Universitário de Lisboa

Faculdade de Medicina Veterinária

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Presidente: Prof.ª. Doutora Mariana Batista, por
delegação da Prof.ª. Doutora Laurentina Pedroso

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Faculdade de Medicina Veterinária

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Epigraph

Enquanto não alcançares a verdade, não
poderás corrigi-la. Porém, se a não corrigires,
não a alcançarás. Entretanto, não te resignes.

- José Saramago, História do cerco de Lisboa – Livro dos Conselhos, 1989.

Leonor Alves Lima
Performance of the Parasympathetic Tone Activity (PTA) Index to
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Dedication

Ao meu pai.

Resumo

O controlo da dor é considerado uma das mais importantes prioridades de bem-estar na medicina veterinária atual, mesmo em procedimentos cirúrgicos de rotina, como uma ovariectomia. Isto é particularmente perceptível numa altura em que o escrutínio público em relação ao bem-estar dos animais é cada vez mais elevado (Mellor *et al.*, 2009).

Embora exista um elevado número de estudos científicos publicados, em grande parte por extrapolação da experiência clínica no homem, e baseados em aspetos comparativos dedicados à avaliação da dor, sua fisiopatologia, bem como estratégias destinadas a reduzi-la, a compreensão da monitoração e do manejo da dor ainda é sensivelmente limitada nos dias de hoje (Gigliuto *et al.*, 2014).

A mudança de atitude baseada no conhecimento atual aliada a uma crescente consciência do sofrimento animal deram espaço à necessidade de compreensão da modulação da dor pela equipa veterinária e também pelos tutores, para que em conjunto pratiquem a mitigação desta nos seus animais (Okafor *et al.*, 2014).

Na ausência de uma comunicação verbal clara, a expressão da dor nos animais é principalmente comportamental. Foram desenvolvidas escalas de classificação utilizando aspetos deste foro, no entanto, estas ferramentas revelam algumas limitações importantes: os ideais antropomórficos não são ocasionalmente ideais e a existência de fatores anestésicos intra-operatórios que inibem a resposta comportamental do animal (Société Mdoloris Medical Systems SAS, 2020). Problematicamente, a dor é, pela sua própria natureza, subjetiva, se não inexistente, portanto, precisamente imensurável em indivíduos anestesiados. Nesses indivíduos, o que pode ser monitorizado é a nociceção e a resposta fisiológica à mesma (Ledowsky, 2019).

A equipa de anestesia tem o papel crucial de diminuir os efeitos deletérios da nociceção e *stress* peri-operatórios ao identificar comorbidades nos pacientes, bem como os riscos dos procedimentos, com o objetivo de proporcionar uma anestesia segura e eficaz para cada um destes. Além disso, a "anestesia" não se restringe ao período em que o paciente está inconsciente, definindo-se antes como um cuidado contínuo que se inicia antes do paciente chegar à equipa veterinária e que termina quando o paciente volta para casa com função fisiológica apropriada e níveis de dor ausentes ou nominais (Grubb *et al.*, 2020).

O manejo adequado das respostas nociceptivas durante a cirurgia pode originar um melhor despertar para o animal após a cirurgia (Société Mdoloris Medical Systems SAS, 2020).

Ao contrário da dor, a nociceção não é uma sensação subjetiva, mas sim a codificação fisiológica e o processamento dos estímulos nocicetivos. Tanto a dor como a nociceção podem existir separadamente uma da outra (Mischkowski *et al.*, 2018).

Além de ser uma meta importante, a monitorização da nociceção continua a ser um desafio nas tentativas de diminuir a prevalência de dor aguda operatória e pós-operatória e de avançar para uma abordagem mais dirigida à anestesia e analgesia (Ledowski, 2019).

A nociceção pode ser dividida em três categorias distintas: somática, visceral e inflamatória. A dor somática (corporal), que tem sido descrita como localizada em humanos como pulsante ou aguda, tem origem na pele e tecidos conjuntivos, incluindo os músculos, ossos e articulações (Okafor *et al.*, 2014). A dor somática que emerge da pele é chamada dor superficial. Se se origina nos tecidos conjuntivos, é chamada dor profunda. Ou seja, dor somática refere-se à dor originada na periferia e pode ser, geralmente, bem localizada (Robertson, 2002). A dor visceral é normalmente mais difícil de localizar e tem origem nos recetores das vísceras como o coração, pulmões, fígado, rins, trato gastrointestinal, bexiga e finalmente o útero (Joshi & Gebhart, 2000). A dor visceral é geralmente descrita como mais desagradável e difusa que a dor somática (Paine *et al.*, 2009). Esta natureza difusa da dor visceral deve-se provavelmente à baixa densidade de inervação sensorial visceral e à divergência substancial de *input* visceral no Sistema Nervoso Central (SNC), (Giamberardino & Vecchiet, 1997; Okafor *et al.*, 2014). Finalmente, a dor inflamatória refere-se ao aumento da sensibilidade devido à resposta inflamatória associada a danos nos tecidos. A resposta inflamatória representa uma série de processos fisiológicos bem orquestrados que ocorrem após uma lesão ou infeção, numa tentativa de a combater e resolver. Caracteriza-se por cinco sintomas clássicos: vermelhidão (*rubor*), calor (*calor*), inchaço (*tumor*), dor ou hipersensibilidade (*dolor*), e perda de função (*functio laesa*). Em condições normais, a inflamação é um importante mecanismo de proteção essencial para a cicatrização de feridas. Apesar disto, a inflamação aguda produz dor evidente através da ativação direta dos neurónios sensoriais que conduzem o sinal de dor (Vasko, 2009).

Uma diversidade de estudos clínicos e técnicas foram desenvolvidos com o intuito de criar orientações e métodos para a monitorização adequada da nociceção (Mathews *et al.*, 2014; McKune *et al.*, 2015; Hernandez-Avalos *et al.*, 2019). Até à data, vários dispositivos comercializados prometeram uma reflexão mais precisa da nociceção do que os sinais vitais tradicionalmente utilizados - pressão arterial e frequências cardíaca e respiratória (Ledowski, 2019).

A monitorização adequada da nociceção, para além do controlo da hemodinâmica, ainda considerado o *gold-standard*, embora com várias limitações, pode permitir a diminuição

da resposta ao *stress* intraoperatório. Os monitores de nociceção são, assim, considerados altamente vantajosos e podem ser integrados em sistemas de ciclo fechado para a administração de analgésicos, permitindo que os anestesistas pratiquem um ajuste preventivo dos níveis de medicação anti-nociceptiva, evitando alterações hemodinâmicas associadas ao *stress* (Ledowsky *et al.*, 2013). Tal tecnologia poderia ser também de grande benefício em outros contextos clínicos além da cirurgia, incluindo a Unidade de Cuidados Intensivos (UCI), onde a dor/nociceção é extremamente prevalente.

Como referido anteriormente, dado que a quantificação da nociceção em sujeitos inconscientes é extremamente difícil, é a "reação" à nociceção que é então utilizada para efeitos de monitorização. Assumindo que a nociceção irá desencadear uma mudança no equilíbrio simpático-vagal em direção a uma resposta de *stress* simpático, a resposta mais frequentemente utilizada ao "*stress* cirúrgico" é um incremento na atividade simpática ou a correspondente diminuição no tónus parassimpático. O acesso relativamente fácil à avaliação dessa resposta simpática pode ser também obtido através de mudanças no controlo autonómico cardíaco, aumento da vasoconstrição periférica, aumento na condutividade galvânica da pele e dilatação pupilar (Ledowsky, 2019).

A função dos órgãos é regulada através do Sistema Nervoso Autónomo (SNA). O SNA é funcionalmente e estruturalmente estabelecido como interface entre o meio interno e externo do corpo, coordenando as suas funções para garantir respostas adaptativas ao *stress* e consequentemente a homeostasia deste (Cortelli *et al.*, 2013). O controlo central das saídas simpáticas e parassimpáticas envolve diversas áreas interligadas distribuídas ao longo do eixo neural. Esta rede central autonómica (CAN) tem um papel vital no controlo da função visceral e adaptação aos desafios internos e externos (Cortelli *et al.*, 2013).

O sistema nervoso simpático (SNS) e o sistema nervoso parassimpático (SNP), ramos do SNA, funcionam de forma antagónica para controlar a atividade visceral, pressão arterial, contratilidade e frequência cardíaca, temperatura corporal, profundidade e frequência respiratória, metabolismo, motilidade gastrointestinal, função da bexiga, função sexual e secreção hormonal (Low, 2021).

Quando os animais sofrem um estímulo nocicetivo, os parâmetros fisiológicos (frequência cardíaca, frequência respiratória, diâmetro pupilar e pressão arterial) podem ser adaptados como uma resposta autonómica à nociceção. No entanto, esses parâmetros são afetados por inúmeros outros fatores, incluindo medo e *stress*. Um único parâmetro fisiológico não pode ser considerado uma ferramenta confiável para avaliar com precisão a nociceção, embora alguns autores recomendem tomá-los como base para o reconhecimento desse processo (Hernandez-Avalos *et al.*, 2019).

Dentro do sistema cardiovascular, o equilíbrio entre o SNS e o SNP resulta numa variação consecutiva do intervalo de batimentos cardíacos ou da variabilidade da frequência cardíaca (VFC). A VFC contínua pode ser medida determinando-se o intervalo de tempo entre uma onda R e a seguinte, num traçado de eletrocardiograma (ECG).

Pacientes humanos submetidos a cirurgia com anestesia geral, apresentaram uma resposta de *stress* devido a danos físicos nos tecidos, nociceção e perda de calor. Essa resposta fisiológica gera aumento da atividade do SNS, alterações no sistema cardiovascular, libertação de cortisol, catecolaminas, mediadores inflamatórios e hormonas (Desborough, 2000), taquicardia, vasoconstrição, diminuição da motilidade gastrointestinal, interferência na cicatrização e privação do sono (Hellyer *et al.*, 2007).

Para melhorar a sedação, analgesia e possível resultado cirúrgico, a VFC tem sido proposta como um método para medir com precisão a resposta ao *stress* e o equilíbrio analgesia-nociceção instantaneamente, quando os pacientes estão sob anestesia geral. Evidências iniciais sugeriram que a estimulação cirúrgica afeta significativamente o SNA e a VFC e que os efeitos diferem com cada técnica anestésica (Latson & O'Flaherty, 1993). Estudos mais recentes demonstraram que a variabilidade da frequência cardíaca é diretamente afetada pelo equilíbrio nociceção-analgesia durante cirurgias sob anestesia geral (Jeanne *et al.*, 2009; Gruenewald *et al.*, 2015), e sugerem que a VFC de alta frequência pode proporcionar uma avaliação mais sensível do equilíbrio nociceção-analgesia do que os parâmetros hemodinâmicos habituais, em humanos (Gruenewald *et al.*, 2013; Sabourdin *et al.*, 2013; Anderson, 2017). É possível que possamos melhorar os resultados gerais dos pacientes com a atenuação desta resposta ao *stress*.

Os comportamentos específicos aos estímulos nocetivos dependem também de fatores como espécie, raça, socialização e temperamento e, portanto, devem ser considerados individualmente (Okafor *et al.*, 2014).

Os mecanismos fisiopatológicos da nociceção (ou seja, o processo neurofisiológico da dor) são semelhantes entre os mamíferos, que podem sofrer como criaturas sensíveis. Além disso, observações mostram que tanto animais quanto humanos desenvolvem o mesmo processo neuronal de reconhecimento, condução e modulação da dor. Como todos os sistemas sensoriais, a nociceção contém os mecanismos necessários para que a sensação de dor seja recebida a nível da periferia (pele, vísceras, músculo esquelético) e posteriormente conduzida ao sistema nervoso central (SNC), onde é processada e conscientemente integrada (a nível espinal e supraespinal), (Rutherford, 2002, Weary *et al.*, 2006; Hellyer, 2007; Mathews *et al.*, 2014). Durante este processo, as respostas periféricas aos danos dos tecidos incluem a libertação local de substâncias como histamina, prostaglandinas, iões de hidrogénio e potássio, conhecidos como a "sopa inflamatória" (Hernandez-Avalos *et al.*, 2019).

Os nociceptores têm terminações nervosas livres e são geralmente compostos por dois tipos de fibras: pequenas fibras A-delta mielinizadas e fibras C não mielinizadas, ainda menores, distintamente aos recetores de toque e pressão (Lynn, 1994).

Um sistema tão perspicaz quanto este sugere que os mamíferos necessitam indispensavelmente da capacidade de diferenciar entre uma variedade de estímulos nocivos, uma vez que desenvolveram uma tal amplitude de recetores específicos. Como exemplo, animais endotérmicos, que mantêm uma temperatura corporal estável apesar das condições externas, beneficiariam de evitar extremos de temperatura, não só para evitar danos, mas para garantir um funcionamento fisiológico ótimo (Sneddon, 2017). De acordo com Sneddon, os nociceptores são transfigurativos na sua fisiologia e, após danos terem ocorrido, de forma alguma retornam à função normal.

A compreensão do processo neurofisiológico da dor/nociceção é mais facilmente obtida se este processo for dividido em cinco etapas consecutivas, assim que o estímulo doloroso ou nociceptivo entra em contato com o organismo (Muir & Woolf, 2001; Lamont, 2008). Estas fases são: transdução, transmissão, modulação, projeção e percepção.

Em humanos, sabe-se que os estados alterados de excitação induzidos pela anestesia dependem dos diferentes efeitos que os fármacos desempenham em determinadas regiões do cérebro (Brown *et al.*, 2012).

Os agentes anestésicos visam áreas importantes do cérebro envolvidas na CAN, particularmente os centros de processamento e fusão de informações para gerar atividade de saída do SNA para múltiplos órgãos. Como consequência, praticamente todos os fármacos usados para sedação tem um efeito sobre o SNA, um fator crítico a ser levado em conta na avaliação dos níveis nociceptivos. O efeito de um agente anestésico sobre o SNA varia devido aos diferentes mecanismos neurais da ação anestésica. Por exemplo, o propofol diminui o tônus autonómico e as respostas barorreflexas à hipotensão, resultando numa diminuição da pressão arterial (PA), devido em grande parte à vasodilatação. Sabe-se que também provoca reduções nas respostas corticais e subcorticais aos estímulos auditivos e tóxicos. Sugere-se que os efeitos sobre o cérebro também são provavelmente refletidos na dinâmica com o SNA, uma vez que a variação da concentração deste fármaco em particular modula diferentemente a ativação cerebral. Por outro lado, e sem alterar a sensibilidade barorreflexa, a dexmedetomidina reduz o tônus simpático sistémico (Valenza *et al.*, 2014). Além disso, existe uma variabilidade entre pacientes em resposta aos analgésicos e às necessidades analgésicas para estímulos nociceptivos (Anderson, 2020).

Um dos objetivos fundamentais do anestesiista veterinário é detetar a nociceção intra-operatória (Gruenewald & Ilies, 2013; Mansour *et al.*, 2017), pois sabe-se que a nociceção devida a analgesia inadequada pode levar a complicações como o desconforto durante o recobro (Rodgers *et al.*, 2000; Kehlet *et al.*, 2006). A este respeito, normalmente ao avaliarmos a nociceção em animais anestesiados esperamos detetar reatividade hemodinâmica, que está relacionada com o aumento da pressão arterial e taquicardia, bem como mudanças no padrão respiratório ou tónus muscular (Hernández-Avalos *et al.*, 2019). Contudo, estas modificações não estão necessariamente e explicitamente relacionadas com a dor, e podem ser também influenciadas pelos agentes anestésicos administrados (Hernández-Avalos *et al.*, 2019). Necessitam-se ferramentas mais específicas que permitam avaliar o estímulo nocicetivo em animais sob esta condição e garantir a deteção precoce em relação à reatividade hemodinâmica (Hernández-Avalos *et al.*, 2019).

Com o objetivo de quantificar o equilíbrio nociceção-antinociceção no paciente anestesiado, de forma mais confiável, utilizando diferentes princípios e algoritmos, vários novos métodos e dispositivos foram introduzidos no mercado e implementados. Dão-se como exemplo a análise de vias reflexas, a fotopletismografia de pulso, reflexos vasomotores da pele *via* laser, Doppler, fluxometria, pupilometria, potenciais cerebrais evocados e variabilidade da frequência cardíaca (Hernández-Avalos *et al.*, 2019). Todos estes métodos de monitorização têm os seus prós e contras. Consequentemente, até à presente data, não existe nenhum dispositivo validado que possa ser recomendado como o dispositivo de eleição para a monitorização da nociceção intraoperatória (Tiwary *et al.*, 2022).

Um desenvolvimento relativamente recente derivado da VFC aliada uma avaliação orientada da atividade vagal, bem como os dados eletrocardiográficos subjacentes - o índice de analgesia-nociceção (ANI) - foi autenticado para monitorização intraoperatória da nociceção em anestesiologia humana (Ledowski *et al.*, 2014). O princípio deste dispositivo é a colocação de dois elétrodos nas posições V1 e V5 no peito, de cada lado do coração, para obter um vetor cardíaco. Estes elétrodos são compostos por um dispositivo de duas partes: um sensor único e um sensor duplo que são ligados por um fio elétrico.

ANI é definido como uma medição contínua padronizada do tónus relativo parassimpático ($p\Sigma$). Cada ciclo respiratório induz uma diminuição rápida e temporária deste tónus, que é responsável pela Arritmia Respiratória Sinusal, levando a um encurtamento transitório dos intervalos R-R (aumento da frequência cardíaca) no traçado do ECG. O ANI quantifica estes "padrões respiratórios" para medir a "quantidade relativa" do tónus de $p\Sigma$. A série de intervalos R-R normais, não ectópicos, é exibida na tela do monitor ANI após a normalização, reamostragem e filtragem (Société Mdoloris Medical Systems SAS, 2020). A

quantidade de tónus $p\sum$ é medida em relação à superfície total da janela através da área compreendida entre os envelopes inferior e superior da série R-R, que é continuamente exibida como uma área sombreada. Quanto maior o $p\sum$, maior a superfície sombreada, e vice-versa (Société Mdoloris Medical Systems SAS, 2020).

O monitor pode ser usado tanto com pacientes inconscientes como conscientes. Em pacientes inconscientes sob anestesia geral, os valores de ANI [50-70] relacionam-se com uma analgesia adequada, o que significa que a antinociceção por opióides é adequada e que a atividade parassimpática é predominante sobre a atividade simpática (Société Mdoloris Medical Systems SAS, 2020).

Uma medida de ANI não pode ser interpretada nas seguintes situações: arritmia; apneia; frequência respiratória inferior a 9 ciclos/minuto; ruído elétrico durante o período de medição; ventilação espontânea irregular; certos tipos de *pacemakers*; transplante cardíaco; fármacos que afetam o nódulo sinusal (atropina e outros medicamentos anticolinérgicos, etc.), (Société Mdoloris Medical Systems SAS, 2020).

O índice ANI foi validado para uso em medicina humana como uma ferramenta não invasiva para avaliar a dor no pós-operatório imediato, pois correlaciona-se significativamente com a intensidade da dor de acordo com alguns estudos científicos (Boselli *et al.*, 2013). Tem sido avaliada durante a anestesia geral em adultos e crianças como uma ferramenta intraoperatória e para avaliação da dor no trabalho de parto, adicionalmente. O ANI apresentou alterações significativas entre os períodos com e sem dor (Le Guen *et al.*, 2012).

Uma avaliação do valor preditivo da ANI para alterações hemodinâmicas durante a cirurgia resultou em relatórios discordantes, com um grupo relatando a sensibilidade/especificidade da pontuação como alta (88% e 83%, respetivamente, para ANI <55 para prever alterações hemodinâmicas dentro de 5 min), enquanto o outro mostrou uma probabilidade preditiva baixa de ANI para detetar alterações (>10% da linha de base), (Ledowski, 2019).

A tecnologia ANI foi posteriormente adaptada para a monitorização da nociceção em animais. O monitor de atividade tonal parassimpática (PTA), (MDoloris Medical Systems, França), é o equivalente veterinário da ANI. O PTA é o primeiro dispositivo de monitorização de tónus parassimpático do mundo para animais (Société Mdoloris Medical Systems SAS, 2020). Como resultado, não foram realizados muitos estudos equivalentes ao ANI em medicina animal, usando o índice PTA.

O PTA utiliza um algoritmo equivalente ao do ANI. Ambos os índices avaliam a nociceção intra-operatória baseada na análise do VFC para medir o tónus parassimpático

relativo, o equilíbrio simpático e o equilíbrio analgésico-nociceção durante um estímulo doloroso (Ledowski, 2019; Ruíz-López *et al.*, 2019).

O PTA contém software para três espécies diferentes: cães, gatos e cavalos.

De forma similar ao ANI, o monitor PTA regista um ECG de superfície (derivação II) usando um sistema de três derivações. Convencionalmente, a derivação cardíaca mais utilizada é a de base-ápex (Société Mdoloris Medical Systems SAS, 2020).

O PTA é uma medida normalizada e contínua do tônus parassimpático ($p\Sigma$) que faz parte do sistema nervoso autónomo (SNA). Utiliza o aumento pontual e rápido do tônus $p\Sigma$ induzido por cada ciclo respiratório para medir a "quantidade relativa" do tônus $p\Sigma$. Estas rápidas mudanças no tônus $p\Sigma$ expressam-se no nóculo sinusal do coração pelas mudanças nos intervalos de tempo entre duas ondas R do eletrocardiograma. A próxima série R-R normal (proveniente de um ciclo cardíaco e não de uma extrassístole) estabelece a série R-R. Após filtragem, normalização e reamostragem, o composto $p\Sigma$ da série R-R é obtido pela medição da superfície gerada pelos ciclos respiratórios. Quanto mais importante é o tônus $p\Sigma$, maior é a área medida pelo monitor (Société Mdoloris Medical Systems SAS, 2020).

O índice PTA fornece um valor objetivo aos anestesiologistas que lhes permite avaliar a analgesia. O monitor apresenta valores entre 0 e 100, correspondentes à percentagem de atividade da porção parassimpática do SNA do animal. Quanto maior o valor do índice PTA, maior o conforto do animal (Société Mdoloris Medical Systems SAS, 2020).

Os valores do índice PTA foram extrapolados a partir dos valores do índice ANI. Um índice de 50-70 sugere a ausência de nociceção (valores ideais); valores próximos a 100 correspondem a um tônus parassimpático predominante (baixo nível de *stress*) ou overdose de opióides; e valores abaixo de 50 correspondem a um tônus simpático predominante associado a um alto nível de *stress* ou dor nocicetiva em animais submetidos a procedimentos cirúrgicos, (Hernandez-Avalos *et al.*, 2019).

O monitor também exibe dois valores da PTA atualizados a cada segundo (superior, à direita): a PTA instantânea (PTAi), calculada sobre os 54 valores da PTA anterior e a PTA média (PTAm), calculada sobre os 176 valores anteriores, (Hernández-Avalos *et al.*, 2019; Ruíz-López *et al.*, 2019). Na parte inferior da tela, uma subjanela exibe o valor do ECG adquirido. Este ECG é filtrado de todos os artefactos técnicos e fisiológicos (por exemplo: extrassístoles).

Ilacões sobre o PTA foram adquiridas a partir de vários estudos clínicos, embora a maioria tenha sido focada em cães.

Um estudo clínico de Mansour e colaboradores revelou que uma variação dinâmica do PTA (Δ PTA) de -18% pode prever mudanças nos parâmetros vitais dentro de 5 minutos

durante a anestesia geral em cães usando morfina como pré-medicação (Mansour *et al.*, 2017). Uma sensibilidade de 77% e uma especificidade de 72% foram demonstradas em cães submetidos a uma avaliação correta dos estímulos nocicetivos com uma consequente previsão da resposta hemodinâmica (Mansour *et al.*, 2017).

Num estudo separado, o PTA também se mostrou útil para diferenciar a eficácia de diferentes tratamentos antinocicetivos em suínos (Leitão *et al.*, 2018).

Em 2019, num trabalho realizado em cães, Aguado observou que o PTA detetava estímulos de baixa intensidade melhor que a FC ou a pressão arterial, sendo a resposta hemodinâmica mais rápida que as alterações da PTA em estímulos nocicetivos de maior intensidade (Aguado *et al.*, 2019). Além disso, estudos experimentais mais recentes comparando o monitor do PTA com alterações cardiovasculares em cães saudáveis revelaram que o índice PTA poderia ser mais eficiente na deteção de estímulos nocicetivos de baixa intensidade do que aqueles que provocam alterações cardiovasculares (Aguado *et al.*, 2020; Mansour *et al.*, 2020).

Embora demonstrem resultados relevantes na monitorização da nociceção, estes monitores ainda não são amplamente utilizados clinicamente. Uma das barreiras que leva a este facto é certamente a falta de dados, especialmente em gatos e cavalos (Anderson, 2020). Consequentemente, são necessários mais estudos para determinar a utilidade do índice PTA para avaliar o equilíbrio nociceção/antinociceção intraoperatória em medicina veterinária (Anderson, 2020).

A inervação do útero é fornecida pelo plexo pélvico. A inervação simpática do útero é dicotomizada através dos nervos hipogástricos direito e esquerdo. A inervação parassimpática é fornecida através dos nervos pélvicos (Fransson, 2016). O nervo hipogástrico surge das raízes do nervo ventral de T12 a L3 e garante a inervação simpática. A inervação parassimpática, definida pelos *nervi* erigentes, surge das raízes do nervo ventral S2 a S4 e estabelece-se na parede lateral pélvica. Os seus órgãos-alvo são os músculos e glândulas lisas das vísceras pélvicas, cólon descendente, reto e canal anal, ureter, bexiga e uretra urinária, genitais femininos e vasos sanguíneos dos músculos lisos (Fletcher, 2021).

Procedimentos cirúrgicos eletivos como ovariectomias e castrações proporcionam modelos acessíveis de dor aguda/nociceção, já que o início e magnitude exatos do estímulo são bem conhecidos e padronizados (Garry *et al.*, 2004). Num esforço para prevenir a reprodução e reduzir a superpopulação subsequente, os programas de esterilização e castração animal são concebidos para facilitar o acesso a este serviço entre populações-alvo (Looney *et al.*, 2008).

Este estudo prospetivo foi realizado no Hospital Escolar Veterinário da FMV-ULHT (Campo Grande, Lisboa) em Março de 2022 e recebeu a aprovação institucional da Comissão de Ética e Bem-Estar Animal da FMV-ULHT.

O objetivo deste estudo foi determinar a utilidade do índice PTA na avaliação da nociceção-analgésia durante o período intraoperatório, em gatas submetidas a ovariectomia. Este estudo assenta na hipótese de que o índice PTA poderia ser utilizado para avaliar uma resposta à dor após estímulos nociceptivos e que a sua variação dinâmica permitiria antecipar respostas hemodinâmicas associadas à nociceção, como relatado com o ANI em pacientes humanos, uma vez que variações de ritmo cardíaco precedem as respostas hemodinâmicas perante estimulação nociceptiva (Jeanne *et al.*, 2009; Boselli *et al.*, 2015).

No presente estudo, foram incluídas 49 gatas fêmeas de diferentes idades, com um peso de $3.05 \text{ kg} \pm 0.64$ (média $\pm$ desvio padrão). Os animais estavam sob os cuidados da Câmara Municipal de Vila Franca de Xira e foram submetidos a um programa de esterilização de animais errantes. Os animais foram recebidos no hospital horas antes do procedimento cirúrgico e avaliados quanto ao seu estado clínico (categoria ASA - American Society of Anesthesiologists), através de exame clínico e hematológico. A glicose pré-cirúrgica foi avaliada e utilizada como modo de comparação com a glicose pós-cirúrgica. Apenas animais ASA 1 e 2 foram incluídos no estudo, para que uma doença concorrente não alterasse a dinâmica do seu sistema nervoso autónomo, afetando as leituras da PTA.

A decisão final quanto à inclusão de qualquer paciente para cirurgia foi feita com base nos achados do exame físico e no cronograma cirúrgico do programa. Os animais foram designados aleatoriamente para um dos três grupos de tratamento: Grupo controlo (GC), grupo de bloqueio com lidocaína (LBG), grupo de bloqueio com bupivacaína (BBG). Esta separação por grupos ocorreu porque esta mesma amostra animal foi utilizada para outro ensaio científico. No presente trabalho, esta separação não é particularmente relevante e, portanto, não será analisada em detalhe.

Os procedimentos de manutenção de registos foram padronizados e cumpriram as diretrizes da prática local. Foi preparado um prontuário médico para cada animal, incluindo número do animal, peso corporal, achados do exame físico, exames hematológicos realizados (hemograma, glicose, proteínas totais), dosagens de todos os medicamentos administrados, vias e tempo de administração, cirurgião responsável, tempo de início e término do procedimento cirúrgico, nome do operador responsável pela preparação do campo cirúrgico e método de antisepsia utilizado, tempo de extubação, anormalidades identificadas e qualquer outra informação pertinente a respeito do estado do animal durante o processo.

Para todos os pacientes, foi realizado um exame físico por um médico veterinário para qualificar o animal como candidato a cirurgia. O sexo e o estado reprodutivo (sexualmente

intacto *versus* castrado) foram verificados antes da anestesia e da cirurgia. O peso corporal foi determinado próximo ao momento da cirurgia para orientar a seleção de fármacos e dosagens.

Dada a natureza de amostra de alto volume deste programa de esterilização, foram usadas dosagens padronizadas de fármacos. Todos os pacientes receberam 20ug/kg de Dexmedetomidina (Dexdomitor, Orion Corporation, Finlândia) e 0,3mg/kg de Metadona (Semfortan, Eurovet Animal Health BV, Holanda), como pré-medicação. Foi feito um registo anestésico e cálculos de medicamentos de emergência específicos para cada um dos pacientes.

Uma vez sedados, os pacientes foram cateterizados através da veia cefálica direita ou esquerda, com um cateter de 24G. A anestesia foi induzida pela administração de 4mg/kg de Propofol (Propofol Lipuro, B. Braun VetCare SA, Espanha), por via intravenosa (IV) e mantida com uma concentração de Isoflurano de 1,5%. A intubação orotraqueal foi realizada usando um tubo endotraqueal de tamanho apropriado. Alguns animais receberam, adicionalmente, um bloqueio quadrado lombar. Os animais foram seguidamente levados para a sala de cirurgia e posicionados em decúbito dorsal, sendo posteriormente conectados a uma máquina anestésica (Mindray WATO EX-20). A terapia com fluidos IV foi iniciada com solução de Lactato de Ringer a 3 mL/kg/h, administrado com uma bomba de infusão.

Todas as ovariectomias (OV) foram realizadas por dois cirurgiões experientes. As fêmeas foram submetidas a OV convencional, utilizando uma celiotomia retro-umbilical mediana de cerca de 3 cm de comprimento. Os ovários e cornos uterinos foram exteriorizados manualmente, após hemostasia permanente e remoção (Langley-Hobbs *et al.*, 2014).

Foi avaliado o tempo anestésico e cirúrgico em cada uma das cirurgias realizadas.

O monitor PTA mostrou um registo gráfico de derivação II do eletrocardiograma (ECG), através de três elétrodos aplicados na pele com gel condutivo.

O algoritmo do dispositivo foi usado para calcular o índice de PTA. O monitor da PTA foi calibrado com os coeficientes específicos de felino descritos. Uma vez colocados os elétrodos de ECG, o critério para considerar válida uma medida de índice de PTA foi o monitor registar uma boa qualidade de sinal e um valor mínimo de 50. Adicionalmente, foram utilizados monitores eletrónicos multiparamétricos bem como feita uma avaliação corrente prática do paciente pelo anestesista. As decisões de tratamento foram tomadas com base nas informações dos monitores eletrónicos e avaliação do anestesista, assim como nos valores do monitor PTA.

Os animais foram mantidos com ventilação espontânea. A monitorização da função respiratória incluiu frequência respiratória (FR), oxigenação (percentagem de hemoglobina saturada com oxigénio [SpO₂]), e ventilação (EtCO₂). A monitorização incluiu Pressão Arterial

Sistólica (SAP) e Média (MAP), frequência cardíaca (FC) e ritmo cardíaco (ECG), tempo de repleção capilar, cor das mucosas. A profundidade anestésica foi monitorizada e confirmada pela ausência de reflexo palpebral, ausência de tônus mandibular e falta de movimentos intencionais por parte dos pacientes. Foi garantida a monitorização da temperatura corporal com suplementação de calor que começou logo desde o posicionamento dos animais na mesa cirúrgica.

Foi administrada analgesia de resgate quando os pacientes apresentavam um aumento de >20% dos valores dos parâmetros hemodinâmicos basais e um índice PTA <50. Com esta finalidade, 0,004mg/kg de Fentanil foram utilizadas (Fentanyl B. Braun, Alemanha). Os mesmos dois investigadores realizaram todas as medições, administrações e registos.

Seis pontos de controlo pré-determinados (T_0 , T_1 , T_2 , T_3 , T_4 e T_5) foram considerados durante a cirurgia como de grande importância para a recolha de dados, pois representavam pontos de possível indução de nociceção nos animais. T_1 representa a aplicação das pinças de campo Backhaus. T_2 representa a abertura da cavidade abdominal. T_3 representa a tração e manuseamento do ovário direito. T_4 corresponde à tração e manuseamento do ovário esquerdo. T_5 corresponde ao encerramento da cavidade abdominal.

Os valores de PTA, bem como os parâmetros vitais incluindo a SAP, MAP (mmHg), FC (bpm) e FR (rpm) foram continuamente monitorizados e sistematicamente recolhidos manualmente. T_0 indica valores basais para esses parâmetros, antes de qualquer estímulo cirúrgico. Esses valores foram considerados meios de comparação com os momentos de estímulo durante a cirurgia, sendo estes os parâmetros utilizados para avaliar necessidade de resgate analgésico. Em cada ponto de controlo, um cronómetro foi reiniciado em sincronia com o início da prática do cirurgião, para avaliar o tempo decorrido entre o estímulo nocicetivo e o início das variações nos parâmetros do PTA e/ou hemodinâmicos.

Em cada animal, os estímulos foram classificados de acordo com a magnitude da resposta: Baixa - nenhuma resposta nas variáveis registadas (PTA imediata, FC, FR); Média - apenas diminuição na leitura de PTAi <50; ou Alta - uma diminuição na leitura de PTAi <50 e um aumento de >20% na FC ou FR, ou ambas. O tempo de resposta foi definido como o tempo decorrido entre a aplicação do estímulo nocicetivo em cada ponto de controlo e uma resposta positiva nos valores da PTA, FC, FR ou valores cardiovasculares. Os valores de pico registados foram os valores máximos da FC ou FR ou os valores mínimos de PTA observados. A magnitude da resposta de pico foi considerada como a mudança percentual dos valores de pico para os valores de linha de base, e o tempo para a resposta de pico foi o tempo decorrido desde o início do estímulo nocicetivo até que o pico de resposta observado.

No final de cada procedimento, o Isoflurano foi descontinuado e a extubação foi realizada assim que o animal recuperou o reflexo de deglutição. Todos os pacientes receberam 0,1mg/kg de Meloxicam, por via subcutânea (Meloxidyl, Ceva Santé Animale, França). Foi coletado sangue para avaliação da glicose pós-cirúrgica. Foram administradas 20ug/kg de um $\alpha 2$ -antagonista (Antisedan, Orion Corporation, Finlândia) para a reversão dos efeitos sedativos da Dexmedetomidina.

A análise estatística foi realizada utilizando SPSS 27.0 para Windows (IBM SPSS Statistics, NY, EUA). A normalidade da distribuição das variáveis quantitativas foi avaliada utilizando os testes Kolmogorov-Smirnov e Shapiro-Wilk. As variáveis PTAi e tempo PTAi não seguiram uma distribuição normal, tendo sido utilizados testes não paramétricos. Para as restantes variáveis, foram utilizados testes paramétricos.

Para cada ponto de controlo foram feitos testes de correlação entre PTA e FC/FR, utilizando a correlação de Pearson. Um valor $p < 0,05$ indica significância estatística.

Para cada ponto temporal foi determinada uma nova variável "Est", onde existiu um Estímulo Nocicetivo (Média ou Alta Intensidade) ou Sem Estímulo Nocicetivo (Baixa Intensidade). Foi depois comparada através do teste t de Student para amostras independentes com as FR e FC do respetivo momento.

Para estimar diferenças no tempo de resposta entre variáveis (PTAi *versus* FC) foi realizado um teste t de Student para amostras independentes. Para cada tempo cirúrgico pré-definido (T_1 , T_2 , T_3 , T_4 , T_5), a variação da PTAi, FC e FR foi avaliada em cada grupo. O teste Mann-Whitney U foi utilizado para comparar as diferenças entre as diferentes variáveis nas diferentes categorias de estímulo (Estímulo de Alta Intensidade *versus* Estímulo de Média Intensidade).

Foi utilizado um teste ANOVA para determinar se havia uma diferença estatisticamente significativa entre as três categorias de PTA no que diz respeito aos valores de glicose pré e pós-cirúrgica. Um teste para amostras emparelhadas foi utilizado para comparar as médias da glicose pré e pós-operatória.

Cento e cinco eventos PTA intraoperatórios (diminuição PTAi abaixo de 50) foram identificados dentro das 49 gatas da amostra. Quatro dos eventos de PTA ocorreram em T_1 , oito ocorreram em T_2 , trinta e seis eventos ocorreram em T_3 , trinta e dois em T_4 e finalmente foram registados vinte e cinco eventos de PTA em T_5 . Considerando todos os eventos, o valor médio do PTAi foi de $37.54 \pm 11.57s$, o tempo médio do PTAi foi $69.87 \pm 78.50s$. A FR apresentou um valor médio de 25.80 ± 8.23 rpm, a FC 131.90 ± 21.32 bpm. Desde o momento de estímulo nocicetivo até que correu um aumento da FC $> 20\%$ decorreram $37.50 \pm 18.76s$.

Os valores médios de PTAi em T₀, T₁, T₂, T₃, T₄ e T₅ foram: 64.81±17.21, 60.73 ± 18.28 s, 43.52±18.41 s, 44.75 ± 20.88s, 47.97 ± 19.55 s, respetivamente. Em média, T₁ (64.8± 17.2) e T₂ (60.7± 18.3) apresentaram um valor de PTAi superior a 50, e T₃ (43.5± 18.4), T₄ (44.8± 20.9) e T₅ (48± 19.6) apresentaram um valor menor a 50. O PTAi registou a sua menor média e o seu valor mínimo em T₃.

Verificaram-se diferenças estatisticamente significativas nos valores de FR e FC entre o grupo com Estímulo Nocetivo e Sem Estímulo Nocetivo, mostrando, em média, valores mais elevados destas variáveis na primeira, nos tempos T₂, T₃ e T₄.

Não existiram diferenças estatisticamente significativas nos valores de FR e FC entre o grupo com Estímulo Nocetivo e Sem Estímulo Nocetivo nos tempos T₁ (p=0,52; p=0,97) e T₅ (p=0,08; p=0,26).

O desempenho do PTA para prever alterações hemodinâmicas dentro de um estímulo nocetivo foi avaliado separadamente em cada ponto, usando correlações de Pearson entre variáveis: PTAi, FC, FR, tendo-se verificado os seguintes resultados:

- T₁ – Ausência de correlação entre PTAi x FC, PTAi x FR e PTAi x Variação de FC;
- T₂ - Correlação negativa e moderada entre PTAi x FC (r = -0.60), PTA x FR (r = -0.58);
- T₃ - Correlação negativa e moderada entre a PTAi x FC (r = -0,20);
- T₄ - Correlação negativa e moderada entre PTAi x FC (r = -0,34) e entre PTAi x FR (r = -0,48);
- T₅ - Correlação negativa moderada entre a PTAi x FR (r = -0.33).

No que diz respeito a estas correlações, a correlação negativa ou inversa descrita em T₂ a T₅ deve-se ao facto de as variáveis (PTAi x FC e/ou PTAi x FR) tenderem a deslocar-se em direção opostas, de tal forma que quando uma aumenta a outra variável diminui, e vice-versa. Pode afirmar-se que quando o valor da PTAi diminui, o valor de FC e FR aumenta. Observou-se também uma correlação positiva e moderada entre FC e FR (r=0,39), o que significa que estas duas variáveis se acompanham quando variam.

As diferenças nos valores de PTAi, FR e FC entre diferentes grupos de intensidades de estímulo (Alta e Média-Intensidade) foram analisadas utilizando a análise de variância. A maioria dos estímulos observados teve Média intensidade, contando um total de 83 eventos contra 22 eventos provocados por um estímulo de Alta intensidade.

Existiram diferenças estatisticamente significativas entre o Tempo de PTAi, a FR e a FC em cada grupo. O grupo de estímulo de Média intensidade teve um tempo de PTAi mais longo (79,02±84,514s) do que o grupo de Alta intensidade (35,32±32,35s). O grupo de Média intensidade teve um valor mais baixo de FR (24,70±8,22 rpm) e FC (127,84 bpm±20,39 bpm) do que o grupo de Alta intensidade (29,78±7,09 rpm; 146,52±18,31 bpm).

No grupo dos Estímulos de Alta Intensidade, o valor médio do tempo PTAi ($35,32s \pm 32,35s$) é inferior ao valor médio do tempo FC ($37,50s \pm 18,76s$), sugerindo que o PTA levou menos tempo a variar, detetando a nociceção, do que a variação da FC neste grupo. O tempo de FC não sofreu alterações significativas no grupo de Estímulo de Média-Intensidade.

Os estímulos de Alta intensidade corresponderam, na sua maioria, a T₃ (tração e manipulação do ovário direito) e T₄ (tração e manipulação do ovário esquerdo), representando 23,8% dos casos.

Foram recolhidas amostras de glicose no início e no fim de cada cirurgia com o propósito de confirmar se existiam diferenças significativas entre os valores pré e pós-cirúrgicos entre os grupos.

Verificou-se a presença de uma diferença estatisticamente significativa entre a glicose pré-cirúrgica ($166,49 \pm 62,78$ mg/dL) e a glicose pós-cirúrgica ($194,73 \pm 41,81$ mg/dL), ($p=0,002$).

Confirmou-se também a existência de uma diferença estatisticamente significativa para a glicose pré-cirúrgica entre os grupos (Estímulos de Alta, Média e Baixa-intensidades), não existindo uma diferença estatisticamente significativa na glicose pós-cirúrgica entre estas categorias.

Não existiu diferença estatisticamente significativa entre os grupos relativamente ao tempo da cirurgia e a variação da glicose.

Este estudo visou avaliar, em contexto intracirúrgico, se o índice PTA e a sua variação dinâmica poderiam ser utilizados para avaliar o equilíbrio analgesia/nociceção em gatos anestesiados e permitir a antecipação de uma resposta hemodinâmica intraoperatória.

Ao medir o tónus parassimpático, o índice PTA tem como objetivo avaliar o equilíbrio entre as componentes parassimpáticas e simpáticas do SNA. Uma mudança de equilíbrio simpático, pós-estímulo, desempenha um papel no incremento da atividade simpática e na diminuição do tónus parassimpático. A estimativa deste equilíbrio intraoperatório pode refletir o equilíbrio analgesia/nociceção.

A correlação negativa descrita de T₂ a T₅ deveu-se às variáveis (PTAi x FC e/ou PTAi x FR) tenderem a mover-se em direções opostas, de modo que quando uma aumenta a outra variável diminui, e vice-versa. Podemos afirmar que quando o valor de PTAi diminui, o valor de FC e FR aumenta. Podemos também afirmar que existe uma correlação positiva e moderada entre FC e FR ($r=0,39$), o que significa que estas duas variáveis se acompanham uma à outra ao variarem, tendo ambas aumentado após um estímulo. Isto é concordante com um estudo de Mansour *et al.*, que demonstrou que uma PTAi inferior a 48 aumentou a probabilidade de uma resposta hemodinâmica, e uma queda de 18% previu com uma precisão

de 80% uma resposta hemodinâmica. É possível concluir que quanto mais intenso for o estímulo, mais altos serão os valores cardiovasculares e mais baixo o índice do PTA.

Em geral, a resposta do PTA a estímulos nocicetivos (Média e Alta Intensidade) foi mais lenta do que a correspondente resposta hemodinâmica, embora estes resultados sejam diferentes ao dividir os grupos por tipo de estímulo. Conseguimos confirmar que o índice de PTA sofreu alterações mais rapidamente quando os animais estavam sob um estímulo de maior intensidade, o que está de acordo com um estudo de Leitão *et al.*, mostrando que o PTA foi mais eficiente na detecção da estimulação do que a FC. No grupo de Estímulo de Alta Intensidade, o valor médio do tempo PTAi ($35,32s \pm 32,35s$) é inferior ao valor médio do tempo HR ($37,50s \pm 18,76s$), sugerindo que o PTA levou menos tempo a variar, detetando nociceção, do que a variação da FC neste grupo. O tempo de FC não sofreu alterações negativas no grupo de Estímulo de Média-Intensidade. Um resultado diferente foi obtido num estudo de Aguado *et al.*, onde não houve diferenças evidentes na resposta do PTA entre os Estímulos de Média ($33 \pm 7s$) e Alta Intensidade ($28 \pm 7s$).

Os estímulos de Alta Intensidade corresponderam a T₃ (tração e manipulação do ovário direito) e T₄ (tração e manipulação do ovário esquerdo) na maioria dos casos, permitindo-nos concluir que estes dois pontos são os mais delicados em termos de monitorização intra-cirúrgica e provavelmente requerem maior controlo com vista a reduzir a prevalência de nociceção operatória aguda, sendo T₃ (ovário direito) onde foram encontrados a maioria dos eventos de PTA. Adicionalmente, foi em T₄ que a PTAi mostrou o seu valor mínimo.

As variáveis hemodinâmicas apresentaram valores mais baixos no grupo de Estímulo de Média intensidade, quando comparadas com o grupo de Estímulo Alta intensidade. Ainda assim, o monitor PTA detetou respostas a estes tipos de estímulos mais baixos, mesmo quando estes não provocavam alterações cardiovasculares relevantes clinicamente observáveis.

Num estudo experimental recente realizado em cães, o PTA detetou estímulos de baixa intensidade de forma mais eficiente do que os parâmetros vitais ainda considerados como sendo os parâmetros padrão (Aguado *et al.*, 2019). O mesmo estudo concluiu que a resposta hemodinâmica aos estímulos nocicetivos de maior intensidade era mais rápida do que as alterações da PTAi (Aguado *et al.*, 2019). Outro estudo comparou o desempenho do PTA com as alterações cardiovasculares em cães saudáveis e revelou também que o índice da PTA poderia ser mais eficiente na detecção de estímulos nocicetivos de baixa intensidade (Aguado *et al.*, 2020; Mansour *et al.*, 2020), o que está de acordo com o que encontrámos no presente estudo, uma vez que o PTA foi capaz de detetar 105 estímulos nocicetivos, e as

frequências cardíaca e respiratória só foram capazes de detetar 22 estímulos nocicetivos (Alta Intensidade).

Um estudo realizado em pacientes humanos utilizando o ANI relatou o desempenho do valor estático de ANI para prever um aumento de mais de 20% na frequência cardíaca ou pressão arterial sistólica, com uma AUC (*Area Under the Curve*) da curva ROC (*Receiver Operating Characteristic*) de 0,92, uma sensibilidade de 80% e uma especificidade de 88% e um limiar de 63 (Jeanne *et al.*, 2014). Resultados semelhantes foram obtidos por Gruenewald *et al.* e Sabourdin *et al.*, que concluíram que o ANI seria mais sensível na deteção de estímulos nocicetivos, quando comparado com os parâmetros clássicos de monitorização.

Relativamente aos valores de glicose, não encontrámos uma relação relevante entre esta variável e o tempo de cirurgia. Os valores de glicose pós-cirúrgica não apresentaram qualquer diferença significativa entre as diferentes categorias de intensidade de estímulo. A comparação da glicose pré cirúrgica com a glicose pós cirúrgica revelou uma diferença estatística significativa entre elas. O valor médio mais elevado, no caso da glicose pós-cirúrgica, pode dever-se à resposta fisiológica ao stress induzido pelos estímulos nocicetivos nos pacientes, durante o período intraoperatório.

Existem algumas limitações associadas ao funcionamento do PTA: os artefactos e a má qualidade do sinal podem levar a valores de PTA inadequados. Os artefactos potenciais podem ser causados por impedância elevada do dispositivo de recolha de ECG de origem, por atividade ou rigidez muscular, movimento do paciente, colocação imprópria do sensor ou interferência elétrica, bem como o uso de medicamentos com impacto na atividade do nó sinusal (atropina ou outras catecolaminas), (Société Mdoloris Medical Systems SAS, 2020).

Na maioria dos casos foi difícil obter um bom sinal no monitor de PTA a fim de iniciar a cirurgia e recolha de dados dos animais em questão. Devido a este facto, nem sempre foi seguida a colocação predefinida de cliques de ECG pelo fabricante (sensor amarelo no membro torácico esquerdo; sensor vermelho no membro torácico direito; sensor preto no membro pélvico direito).

Foram utilizadas seis combinações diferentes de colocação destes cliques ao longo de todo o processo. Além disso, o PTA não conseguiu obter um bom sinal quando a manta de aquecimento estava ligada durante de cirurgia. Por ser considerada uma ferramenta eficaz para avaliação da nociceção durante a cirurgia, e devido à necessidade de manter a temperatura corporal do animal no decurso da mesma, esta é considerada uma limitação que deve ser examinada pelo fabricante. Para prevenir este fenómeno, foi realizado um pré-aquecimento da manta até à calibração do PTA.

Seria também importante e interessante avaliar o monitor PTA nesta espécie, utilizando o mesmo monitor em diferentes contextos e tipos cirúrgicos e/ou com diferentes fármacos administrados.

Apesar de terem seguido as mesmas diretrizes para as ovariectomias, o facto de haver dois cirurgiões distintos a realizar as cirurgias neste estudo deve ser considerado como uma limitação, devido a variações individuais que poderiam advir deste facto. Além disso, havia dois operadores de recolha de dados que também podem representar variabilidade para o estudo.

Elevada variabilidade interindividual e variações aleatórias dentro dos sujeitos, bem como alterações de tónus autonómico de acordo com a idade do paciente são ainda outros fatores de confusão que devem ser tidos em conta. Além disso, a administração de medicamentos analgésicos ou o uso de anestesia regional podem influenciar os resultados.

É da maior importância manter uma gestão adequada das respostas nocetivas durante a cirurgia, garantindo o bem-estar do animal no decurso da mesma e também no pós-operatório.

Este é o único estudo que visa a avaliação da capacidade preditiva de estímulos nocetivos por parte do monitor PTA em gatos, em contexto intracirúrgico, tendo permitido uma melhor compreensão da monitorização do equilíbrio analgesia-nociceção nesta espécie e mostrado resultados clinicamente significativos com a sua utilização

Embora alguns fatores tenham interferido na aquisição de leituras do PTA, a monitorização através desta ferramenta revelou-se mais rápida e fiável para identificar o *input* nocetivo, quando comparada com a monitorização de FC em estímulos intracirúrgicos de Alta intensidade, o que está de acordo com estudos anteriores realizados em cães. Sendo um dos poucos estudos clínicos realizados em gatos, o presente estudo visa diminuir a notável falta de dados relativos à monitorização com PTA nesta espécie, mostrando resultados clinicamente significativos com a sua utilização. É muito importante desenvolver mais estudos utilizando este monitor de nociceção com um maior número de indivíduos, a fim de obter resultados mais fiáveis e contribuindo para uma abordagem mais dirigida à anestesia e analgesia e, portanto, reduzir a prevalência da nociceção em contexto operatório e pós-operatório. Seria clinicamente interessante avaliar a nociceção utilizando o mesmo monitor de PTA em diferentes contextos e tipos cirúrgicos e/ou com diferentes fármacos administrados, em gatos.

Abstract

Parasympathetic tone activity (PTA) is an index based on the analysis of heart rate variability that has been recently developed to evaluate the analgesia/nociception balance in anesthetized animals.

Detection of nociceptive stimuli responses during general anesthesia remains a challenge. Acute changes of at least 20% in heart rate and arterial blood pressure are clinically used to assess intraoperative nociception. Monitoring nociception is an important objective and allows for reducing the intraoperative stress response far beyond the basic control of hemodynamic responses. The nociception detection allows reducing of patient discomfort at recovery as well as severe postoperative pain, morbidity and mortality.

The purpose of this study was to determine the utility of the PTA index for the assessment of analgesia/nociception during the intraoperative period in 49 female cats undergoing ovariectomy. We hypothesized that the PTA index could be used to assess a nociceptive response following a nociceptive stimulus and that its dynamic variation would permit anticipation of hemodynamic responses associated with nociception.

Intra-surgical PTAi score, heart rate, respiratory rate and systolic and mean blood pressure were assessed at the following predefined time-points: T₀ (basal values before any surgical stimulus of the anesthetized cats), T₁ (clamping of surgical field drapes to the animal with Backhaus clamps), T₂ (laparotomy of the abdominal cavity), T₃ (handling of the right ovary), T₄ (handling of the left ovary), T₅ (closure of the abdominal cavity).

105 intraoperative "PTA events" (PTA decrease <50) were identified within all subjects, 79% being related to Medium-intensity stimuli. HR mean value was lower in Group 1 (127.84 bpm±20.4 bpm) compared to Group 2 (146.52±18.3 bpm). Regarding PTAi response time, it was longer in Group 1 (79.02±84.5s) than in Group 2 (35.32±32.35s). In Group 2, the mean value of PTAi Time (35.32±32.35s) was lower than the mean value of HR Time (37.50±18.77s).

There were statistically significant differences between PTAi Time and HR Time in Group 2 ($p \leq 0.05$). There was a moderate negative correlation between PTAi and HR within all subjects exclusively at point T₂, meaning that in the presence of nociception, the PTAi value decreases and HR increases.

Keywords: analgesia; cats; nociception; ovariectomy; parasympathetic tone activity.

Abbreviations

ANI - Analgesia–Nociception Index

ANS - Autonomic Nervous System

ASA - American Society of Anesthesiologists

AUC - Area Under the Curve

BBG - Bupivacaine block group

BP - Blood Pressure

CAN - Central Autonomic Network

CG - Control group

CNS - Central Nervous System

ECG - Electrocardiographic/Electrocardiogram

e.g. - For Example (stands for “*exempli gratia*”)

Et al. - And Others (stands for “*et alii*”)

EtCO₂ - End-Tidal Carbon Dioxide

HR - Heart Rate

HRV - Heart Rate Variability (HRV)

Hz - Hertz

IASP - International Association for the Study of Pain

ICU - Intensive Care Unit

i.e. - That Is (stands for “*id est*”)

IV - Intravenous

LBG - Lidocaine block group

MAP - Median Arterial Pressure

OV - Ovariectomy

PNS - Parasympathetic Nervous System

PTA - Parasympathetic Tone Activity

PTAi - Instantaneous PTA

PTAm - Average PTA

$p\Sigma$ - Sum Parasympathetic Tone

ROC - Receiver Operating Characteristic

SAP - Systolic Arterial Pressure

SNS - Sympathetic Nervous System

SpO₂ - Percentage of Hemoglobin Saturated with Oxygen

SPSS - Statistical Package for the Social Sciences

α - Alpha

β - Beta

Δ - Delta

% - percent

~ - approximately

= - equal

< - less than

> - greater than

$\geq$ - greater than or equal to

$\pm$ - plus or minus

kg - kilogram

mg - milligram

μg - micrograms

mL - milliliter

h - hour

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1. Curricular Internship

As part of the completion of the Integrated Master's Degree in Veterinary Medicine at the Universidade Lusófona de Humanidades e Tecnologias, the author of this dissertation carried out a curricular internship in Small Animal Clinics. It took place at the Veterinary School Hospital of the Universidade Lusófona de Humanidades e Tecnologias, in Lisbon, and was prosecuted from October 1st 2021 to April 1st 2022 (6 months), under the supervision of Professor João Martins and with the collaboration of the whole medical team. The working schedule was 40 hours per week, distributed in day shifts (08-17h; 09-18h; 11-20h), intermediate (14-23h; 15-00h), and night shifts (22-09h), spread over all days of the week.

This internship was crucial for the theoretical and practical consolidation of the knowledge and skills acquired during the author's academic career, as well as for the acquisition and development of new ones. During this period, in addition to the personal and professional growth obtained, the increase of several essential skills to clinical practice in a hospital context was promoted: integration, communication and teamwork, monitoring and discussion of clinical cases, clinical reasoning, handling and monitoring of animals, performance of complementary diagnostic tests, preparation and administration of medication and aid, support and implementation of various procedures in different clinical areas and specialties. Besides the learning cultivated *in loco*, it was possible to absorb additional theoretical knowledge, namely regarding methodologies in emergencies, by participating in lectures promoted by the medical team of the Hospital - "How to survive the night", by Dr. Raquel Palma.

During this period, the scientific study that allowed the writing of this dissertation was developed.

1.1 Casuistic of the Curricular Internship

In the course of the internship, the author followed several clinical cases in the context of emergency, internment, consultation and surgery. In the contexts reported, it was possible to observe and perform numerous essential procedures for the diagnosis and treatment of dogs, cats and several exotic species (Table 1), as well as to discuss them with the medical team. It was also feasible, given the school environment, the monitoring, supervision and transmission of knowledge to students in various stages of their academic career, both in Veterinary Medicine and Veterinary Nursing.

Table 3 – Frequency of species by hospital setting.

	Dogs	Cats	Exotics
<i>Emergencies</i>	34	47	9
<i>Internments</i>	139	206	22
<i>Consultations</i>	36	42	16
<i>Surgeries</i>	109	231	9
TOTAL	318	526	56

1.1.1 Emergency

Contact with the clinical cases admitted in emergency situations was mostly possible during night and weekend hours. The reasons for admission to an emergency consultation are specified and distributed by percentage in Chart 1. The procedures performed were: assistance in resuscitation techniques, execution of general condition tests, performance of orthopedic examination, control of convulsions, abdominocentesis and thoracentesis, venous access, preparation and administration of drugs, thermal regulation of hyperthermic animals, hypodermoclysis, wound cleansing and monitoring of vital parameters.

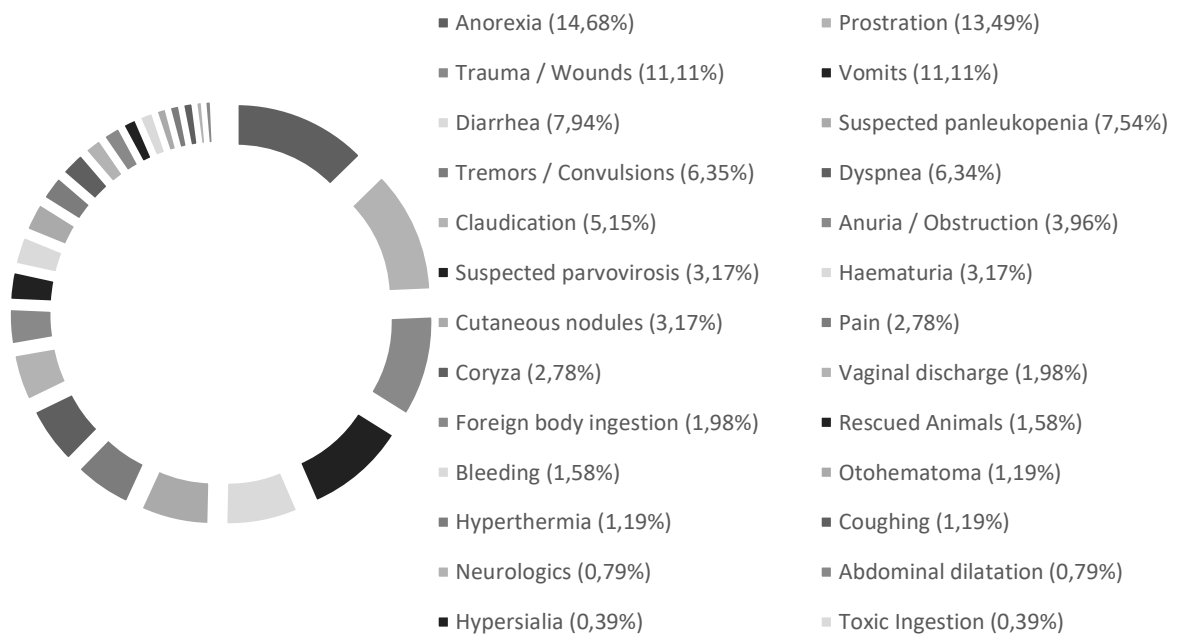


Chart 2 - Distribution, by percentage, of the motives for entry to the emergency consultations.

1.1.2 Internment

In this context, it was feasible to perform: the preparation and administration of drugs, execution of general condition tests, application of pain and Glasgow scales, collection of samples for analysis (blood, urine, feces), placement and replacement of venous and urinary catheters, control of transfusions, execution and change of wound dressings, cleaning of wounds, removal of surgical sutures, ultrasounds and control x-rays, monitoring of post-surgical recoveries, bladder expressions, physiotherapy, nebulizations, glucose, lactate, and ketone body dosage, feeding, walking, and maintaining of the patients' hygiene and their boxes'. Most of these functions were also performed on patients admitted to the hospital's Infetocontagious Diseases Unit, whose pathologies were identified as: panleukopenia, calicivirus, feline respiratory complex, feline infectious peritonitis, parvovirus, canine distemper, herpesvirus, and leptospirosis. The reasons for hospitalization are specified and distributed by percentage in Chart 2.

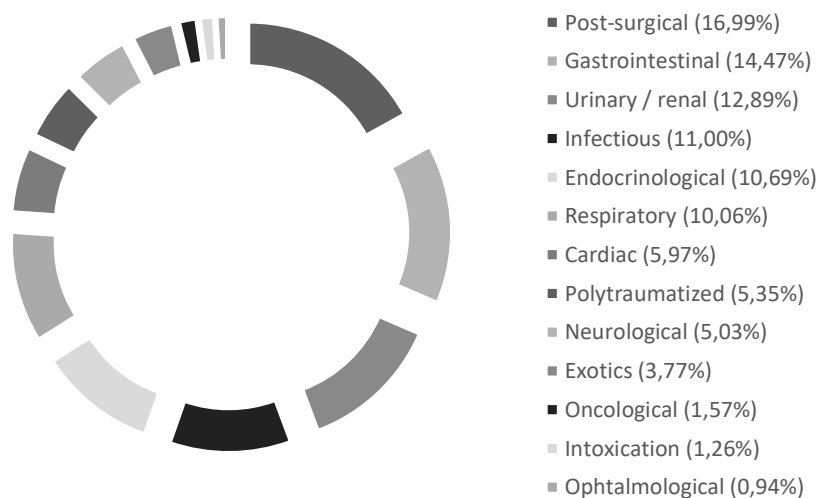


Chart 2 - Distribution, by percentage, of the motives for accompanied hospitalizations.

1.1.3 Consultation

It was possible to monitor several consultations of diverse specialties, as well as to perform some of them on an individual basis. Among the assigned charges, the following stood out: admission of patients and communication with owners, anamnesis and examination of the patient's general condition, preparation and administration of drugs, vaccine prophylaxis, animal restraint, monitoring and performance of imaging tests (x-rays, ultrasounds, CT scans, echocardiograms), collection of samples for analysis (blood and urine by cystocentesis), active assistance during consultations, performance of alternative therapies, namely electrotherapy,

moxotherapy, photobiomodulation and acupuncture, discussion of clinical cases, means of diagnosis and treatments to be applied. Chart 3 specifies the areas of consultation observed, as well as their distribution by percentage.

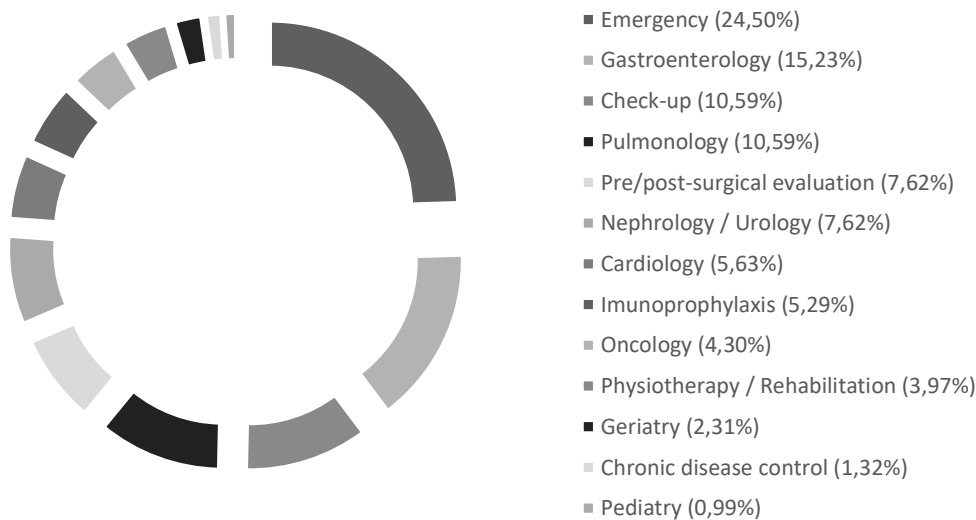


Chart 3 - Distribution, by area and percentage, of the monitored consultations.

1.1.4 Surgery

The author dedicated the majority of the time to this area, either by personal preference but also because the present dissertation is framed in this area. The functions performed varied according to the type of surgery: assistant surgeon, circulator, anesthetic monitoring and intraoperative drug administration, pre-surgical preparation of animals (selection, calculation and application of anesthetic protocol, catheterization, collection of blood samples for pre-surgical analysis, trichotomy, antisepsis and endotracheal intubation) and post-surgical planning and monitoring. Table 2 specifies the types of surgery performed and followed up on-site, by area. Of these, the author had the opportunity to participate, with partial or full autonomy, in multiple orchiectomies, ovariectomies and ovariohysterectomies of dogs and cats (the most prevalent), nodulectomies and scaling with and without removal of dental pieces. Extraordinarily, the author also participated as a circulator in an emergency surgery performed on an animal that was admitted with gastric and splenic dilatation/torsion.

Table 4 – Types of surgeries accompanied, by surgical area.

Surgical area	Procedure	Enumeration
<i>Soft tissue</i>	Ovariohysterectomies	113
	Ovariectomies	27
	Orchiectomies	69
	Nodulectomies	13
	Gastrotomies	2
	Esplenectomies	3
	Mastectomies	7
	Total Ear Canal Ablation (TECA)	2
	Prolapses / hernias resolutions	5
	Preputial plasty	1
	Enterectomies	3
<i>Orthopedics</i>	Limb(s) amputation	5
	Caudectomies	2
	Pancarpal arthrodesis	1
	Femoral head excisive arthroplasties	2
	Fracture resolutions	15
	Tibial Closing Wedge Osteotomy (TCWO)	1
	Tibial plateau Leveling Osteotomy (TPLO)	4
	Bone / joint punctures	2
<i>Endoscopy</i>	Orthopedic external fixators removal	3
	Bronchoscopies	7
	Exploratory laparotomies	3
	Laparoscopic ovariectomies	3
	Arthroscopy	1
	Digestive Endoscopies	6
	Thoracoscopies	1
	Rinoscopies	1
	Ureteroscopy	1
<i>Stomatology</i>	Scaling	24
	Exodonties	9
	Resolution of mandibular fractures	2
	Oronasal reconstruction	1
	Cerclages removal	3
	Removal of gingival masses	1
<i>Ophthalmology</i>	Enucleations	5
	Removal of eyelid nodules	1
TOTAL		349

1. Introduction

Pain control is considered one of the most important welfare priorities in veterinary medicine today, even for minor routine surgical procedures such as an ovarioectomy (OV). This is particularly noticeable at a time when public scrutiny regarding animal welfare is high (Mellor *et al.*, 2009).

Although there is a plethora of published scientific studies, largely by extrapolation from clinical experience in man and based on comparative aspects, dedicated to assessing pain, its pathophysiology, as well as strategies aimed at reducing it, the comprehension of pain monitoring and management are still sort of limited in the present day (Gigliuto *et al.*, 2014).

The International Association for the Study of Pain (IASP) characterizes pain as ‘an unpleasant sensory and emotional experience associated with actual or potential tissue damage or described in terms of such damage’. Freedom of from pain has long been considered a basic human right (Ledowsky, 2019).

These attitudinal changes based on current knowledge, enlightenment and awareness towards animal suffering have given space to the need of understanding pain modulation by the veterinary team and also clients to incur extra effort for the mitigation of it in their animals (Okafor *et al.*, 2014).

In the absence of clear verbal communication, the expression of pain in animals is mainly behavioral. Rating scales using behavioral aspects have been developed, however, these tools reveal some major limitations: anthropomorphic ideals are not occasionally ideal, and the existence of intraoperative anesthetic factors that inhibit the animal’s behavioral response (Société Mdoloris Medical Systems SAS, 2020). Problematically, pain is subjective, by its nature, if not non-existent, thus accurately unmeasurable in anesthetized subjects. To those subjects, what can be monitored is nociception and its physiological expression (Ledowsky, 2019).

The anesthesia team has the crucial role of diminishing the deleterious effects of perioperative nociception and stress when identifying patient comorbidities and procedures risks aiming to provide ideally safe and efficacious anesthesia for each patient. Additionally, “anesthesia” is not narrowed only to the period when the patient isn’t conscious but a continuum of care that initiates before the patient gets to the veterinary team and ends when the patient is returned home with appropriate physiologic function and absent or nominal pain levels (Grubb *et al.*, 2020).

Appropriate management of nociception responses during surgery can convey improved awakening for the animal after the surgery (Société Mdoloris Medical Systems SAS, 2020).

1.1 Nociception vs. pain

In contrast to pain, nociception is not a subjective feeling. It can be categorized as the physiological encoding and processing of nociceptive stimuli. Both pain and nociception may exist separately (Mischkowski *et al.*, 2018).

Aside from being an important goal, monitoring nociception remains a challenge in attempts to diminish the prevalence of acute operative and postoperative pain and to move towards a more directed approach to anesthesia and analgesia (Ledowski, 2019).

Aside from being an important goal, monitoring nociception remains a challenge in attempts to diminish the prevalence of acute operative and postoperative pain and to move towards a more directed approach to anesthesia and analgesia (Ledowski, 2019).

Nociception can be further divided into three distinct categories: somatic, visceral and inflammatory. Somatic body pain, which has been described as localized in humans, aching, pulsating or sharp pain, originates from the skin and connective tissues, including the muscles, bones and joints (Okafor *et al.*, 2014). Somatic pain emerging from the skin is called superficial pain. If it originates in the connective tissues, it is named deep pain. That is to say, somatic pain refers to pain originating from the periphery and can be, generally, well-localized (Robertson, 2002). Visceral pain is usually harder to localize and originates from receptors in the viscera like the heart, lungs, liver, kidneys, gastrointestinal tract, bladder and finally the uterus (Joshi & Gebhart, 2000). Visceral pain is usually described as more displeasing and diffuse than somatic pain (Paine *et al.*, 2009). This diffuse nature of visceral pain is probably due to the low density of visceral sensory innervations and substantial divergence of visceral input within the Central Nervous System (CNS), (Giamberardino & Vecchiet, 1997; Okafor *et al.*, 2014). Finally, inflammatory pain refers to increased sensitivity due to the inflammatory response associated with tissue damage. The inflammatory response represents a series of physiological processes that occur after an injury or infection to combat and resolve it. It is characterized by five typical symptoms: pain/hypersensitivity (*dolor*), warmth (*calor*), redness (*rubor*), swelling (*tumor*) and loss of function (*functio laesa*). Under normal conditions, inflammation is an important protective mechanism, essential for wound healing. In spite of this, acute inflammation produces overt pain via direct activation of specific neurons that conduct the pain signal (Vasko, 2009).

1.2 Nociception monitoring

A diversity of clinical studies and techniques have been developed with the intent of creating guidelines and methods for adequate monitoring of nociception (Mathews *et al.*, 2014;

McKune *et al.*, 2015; Hernandez-Avalos *et al.*, 2019). To date, several commercialized devices promise a more accurate reflection of nociception, when compared with the traditionally used vital signs - blood pressure and respiratory and heart rates (Ledowski, 2019).

Nociception monitoring may allow diminishing of intraoperative stress response beyond merely controlling hemodynamics, still considered to be the gold-standard to date, though with several limitations. Nociception monitors are therefore considered highly advantageous and could be integrated into closed-loop systems for the administration of analgesics, enabling anesthetists to practice a pre-emptively adjustment of anti-nociceptive medication levels, hence preventing stress-associated hemodynamic changes (Ledowsky *et al.*, 2013). Such a technology could be as well of significant benefit in other clinical contexts aside from surgery, including the Intensive Care Unit (ICU), where pain/nociception is extremely prevalent (Ledowski, 2019).

As stated before, as nociception quantification in unconscious subjects is exceedingly difficult, it is the 'response' to nociception that is being utilized for monitoring purposes. Assuming that nociception will trigger a shift in the sympathovagal balance towards a sympathetic stress response, the most frequently utilized response to 'surgical stress' is an increment in sympathetic activity and/or the opposite parasympathetic tone response. Relatively easy access to the evaluation of such these responses can be obtained through recognition of changes in cardiac autonomic control, increased peripheral vasoconstriction, increased galvanic skin conductance and pupillary dilatation (Ledowsky, 2019).

1.3 Autonomic Nervous System characterization

Organ function is regulated via the Autonomic Nervous System (ANS). The autonomic nervous system is functionally and structurally settled to interface between the internal and external milieu of the body, coordinating its functions to guarantee adaptive responses to stress and consequently homeostasis (Cortelli *et al.*, 2013). Central control of the sympathetic and parasympathetic outputs involves diverse interconnected areas distributed throughout the neuroaxis. This central autonomic network (CAN) has a vital role in the control of visceral function and adaptation to internal or external challenges (Cortelli *et al.*, 2013).

The sympathetic nervous system (SNS) and parasympathetic nervous system (PNS), branches of the ANS, function antagonistically to control visceral activity including blood pressure, heart contractility and rate, body temperature, respiratory depth and rate, metabolism, gastrointestinal motility, bladder function, sexual function and hormone secretion (Low, 2021).

When animals suffer a nociceptive stimulus, the physiological parameters of heart rate (HR), respiratory rate (RR), pupillary diameter and blood pressure can be adapted as an autonomic response to nociception. However, these parameters are affected by numerous other factors, including fear and stress, meaning one single physiological parameter alone cannot be considered a reliable tool for assessing nociception precisely, though some authors recommend taking them as a basis for acknowledging this process (Hernandez-Avalos *et al.*, 2019).

1.4 Heart rate variability vs. SNS/PNS

Within the cardiovascular system, the balance between the SNS and PNS results in a consecutive heartbeat interval variation or heart rate variability (HRV). Continual HRV can be measured by determining the time interval from one R wave to the next on an ECG trace. HRV consists of both high-frequency and low-frequency (0.04–0.15Hz) components when assessed using frequency analysis. High-frequency variability appears to contemplate changes solely to the PNS, while low-frequency reflects alterations to both the PNS and SNS (Anderson, 2017). In human patients, even with general anesthesia, patients undergoing surgery experience a stress response because of physical damage to tissues, nociception, and heat loss. This physiologic response generates increased SNS activity, changes in the cardiovascular system, cortisol, catecholamines, inflammatory mediators and hormone release (Desborough, 2000), causes tachycardia, vasoconstriction, retarded healing, decreased gastrointestinal motility, and sleep deprivation (Hellyer *et al.*, 2007).

To improve sedation and analgesia and possible surgical outcome, HRV has been proposed as a method to accurately measure the stress response and the balance of analgesia and nociception instantaneously when patients are under general anesthesia. Early evidence suggested that surgical stimulation significantly affects the ANS and HRV and that the effects differ with each anesthesia technique (Latson & O'Flaherty, 1993). More recent studies have shown that heart rate variability is directly affected by the nociception–analgesia balance during surgeries under general anesthesia (Jeanne *et al.*, 2009; Gruenewald *et al.*, 2015), and suggest that high-frequency HRV may provide a more sensitive judgment of the nociception–analgesia balance than the habitual hemodynamic parameters, in humans (Gruenewald *et al.*, 2013; Sabourdin *et al.*, 2013; Anderson, 2017). We may improve patient outcomes with the attenuation of this stress response.

Specific behaviors to nociceptive stimuli also depend upon factors like species, breed, rearing and temperament and therefore must be taken into consideration individually (Okafor *et al.*, 2014).

1.5 Functional organization of the autonomic nervous system

Nociception's pathophysiological mechanisms are homogeneous among mammals, which can all suffer as sensitive creatures. Moreover, studies show that both humans and animals developed the same neuronal system of recognizing, conducting and modulating pain. Like all sensory systems, nociception contains specific mechanisms required for the sensation to be received at some periphery level (viscera, skin, skeletal muscles) and then to be conducted to the CNS. There, it is processed and integrated consciously at spinal and supraspinal levels (Rutherford, 2002; Weary *et al.*, 2006; Hellyer, 2007; Mathews *et al.*, 2014). During this process, the peripheral responses to tissue damage include the release of substances like prostaglandins, histamine, hydrogen ions and potassium, which are also known as the "inflammatory soup" (Hernandez-Avalos *et al.*, 2019).

The forebrain includes the hypothalamus, which is involved in the integrated control of endocrine and autonomic responses for homeostasis and adaptation. Its components of the anterior limbic circuit, including the insula, agenesis of the corpus callosum, and amygdala, are involved in the integration of bodily sensation with emotional and oriented autonomic responses (Benarroch, 2012; Cortelli *et al.*, 2013). The primary afferent fibers lead impulses towards the dorsal root ganglion and into the dorsal horn of the spinal cord. It's the most superficial laminae of the superficial dorsal horn that contain the specific nociceptive cells (I and II). The different cortical regions forming the 'pain matrix' are activated via lamina V neurons that mainly project to the thalamus through the spinothalamic tract (D'Mello, 2008).

Somatosensory neurons are situated in the peripheral ganglia (trigeminal and dorsal root ganglia), located apace with the spinal column and medulla (Dubin & Patapoutian, 2010).

Nociceptors have free nerve endings and their fibers are generally of two types: myelinated A-delta fibers and unmyelinated C fibers (Figure 1), distinctively to touch and pressure receptors (Lynn, 1994). The unmyelinated C fibers are smaller than the A-delta fibers. Electrophysiological and anatomical studies marked these fibers to be categorized by their myelination, conduction velocity and fiber diameter. A C fiber diameter is relatively minor and conducts slower than an A-delta fiber. Their peripheral afferent innervates the dermis and/or epidermis and its central process projects to the dorsal horn's superficial laminae I and II (Dafny, 2020).

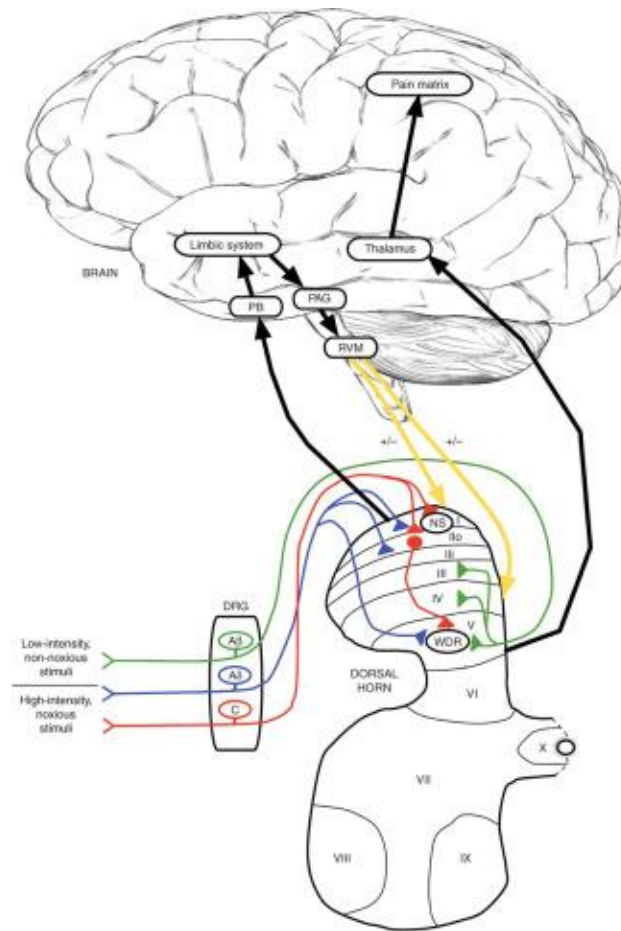


Figure 1 – Pain/nociception pathways from the periphery to the brain. Primary afferent fibres (A β , A δ , and C-fibres); Dorsal root ganglion (DRG); Nociceptive specific (NS); Wide dynamic ranges (WDRs); Parabrachial area (PB); Periaqueductal grey (PAG); Rostral ventromedial medulla (RVM), (D’Mello & Dickenson, 2008).

Several nociceptive C-fiber types in mammals have been identified, which are solely mechanically sensitive and responsive to cold or heat. They may be termed “silent,” since they only respond to heat when sensitized (Kress *et al.*, 1992). A-fiber nociceptors project to superficial laminae I and V (Figure 2). Afferent neurons project centrally to the brainstem and dorsal horn of the spinal cord and peripherally to the skin and further organs (Dubin & Patapoutian, 2010).

Anatomic studies show that the majority of cutaneous mammalian fiber types are largely nociceptive [~68% of fibers (12% A-delta, 30% C-polymodal; 20% C-mechanothermal or heat alone, and 5% C-silent)], leaving 32% involved in touch and pressure (22% A-delta, 6% non-nociceptive A-delta, and ~5% low-threshold touch C fibers), (Kress *et al.*, 1992; Cain *et al.*, 2001; Lewin & Moshourab, 2004; Albers *et al.*, 2006).

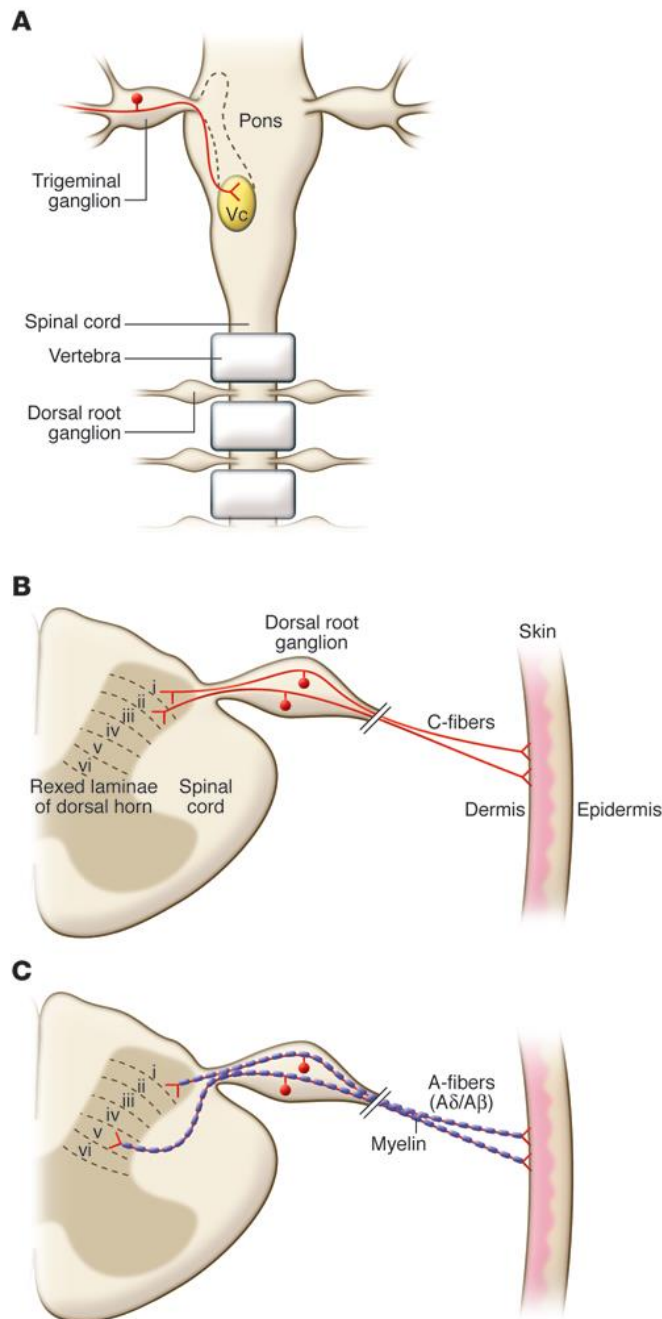


Figure 2 - Anatomy of nociceptors (Dubin & Patapoutian, 2010).

Such a discerning system would suggest mammals indispensably require the ability to differentiate between a variety of noxious stimuli as they have evolved such a span of stimuli-specific receptors.

As an example, endothermic animals that are able to maintain a stable corporal temperature besides external conditions may benefit from avoiding extreme temperatures, not only to avoid damages but to guarantee optimal physiological functioning (Sneddon, 2017). According to Sneddon, 2017, nociceptors are transfigurative in their physiology and, after the damage has occurred, by no means return to normal function.

1.6 Pain/nociception neurophysiology processes

Comprehension of the neurophysiological process of pain/nociception is more easily obtained if this process is divided into five consecutive stages, once the painful or nociceptive stimulus comes into contact with the organism (Figure 3), (Muir & Woolf, 2001; Lamont, 2008). These phases are:

(A) Transduction: the nociceptive stimulus is transformed into an electrical signal in the nociceptors, causing peripheral changes that are perceived as indicators of pain. These indicators include, among others: swelling, redness and translucence of the skin.

(B) Transmission: is defined as the conduction of the electrical signal produced in the nociceptors through the axons of the first-order neurons, making synapsis with the second-order neurons in the dorsal horn of the spine (Taylor & Robertson, 2004; Muir, 2009; Hernandez-Avalos *et al.*, 2019). This information is transmitted through two primary afferent nociceptive neurons, the A (known as high-threshold mechanoreceptors due to their response to high-intensity mechanical stimuli) and C fibers or polymodal nociceptors (Hernandez-Avalos *et al.*, 2019).

(C) Modulation: the process through which the excitatory and inhibitory mechanisms alter the transmission of the nerve impulse (Hernandez-Avalos *et al.*, 2019).

(D) Projection: the nociceptive information is transferred to the brain through the nervous tracts that originate in the dorsal horn, (supraspinal structures - spinothalamic and spinoreticular), (Gaynor & Muir, 2014; Hernandez-Avalos *et al.*, 2019)

(E) Perception: is based on the processing and integrating of the information that occurs in sundry, specific areas of the brain, such as the cerebral cortex and thalamus, where sensory characteristics are established, including the type of nociceptive stimulus, onset, and location (Hernandez-Avalos *et al.*, 2019).

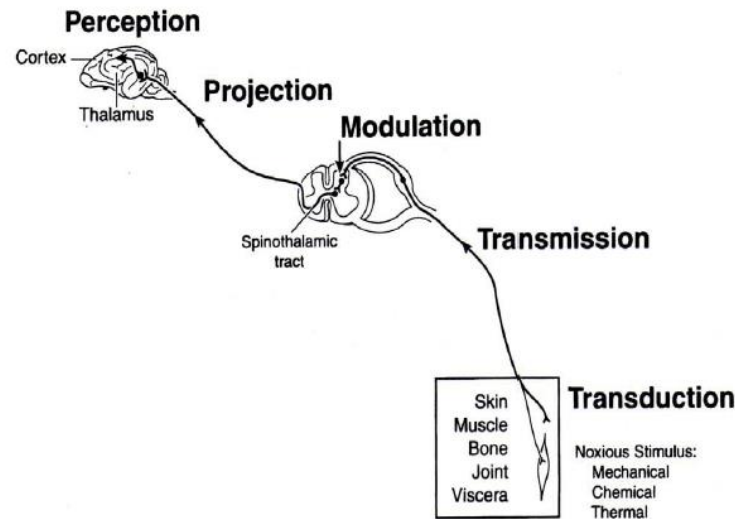


Figure 3 – Schematic diagram of pain process (Alvin, 2006).

1.7 Drug effects on ANS

In humans, it is known that anesthesia-induced altered states of arousal depend on drugs having their different effects on particular brain regions (Brown *et al.*, 2012).

Anesthetic agents target key brain areas involved in the CAN, particularly the brainstem centers processing and merging information to generate ANS outflow activity to diverse organs. As a consequence, practically every drug utilized for sedation has an effect on the ANS, as it varies due to the different neural mechanisms of its action. For instance, Propofol diminishes autonomic tone and baroreflex responses to hypotension, resulting in a decrease in blood pressure (BP), to a large extent due to vasodilatation. These are critical factors to take into account when assessing nociceptive levels. It is known that it too elicits reductions in cortical and subcortical responses to auditory and noxious stimuli. It is suggested that the effects on the brain are also likely reflected in ANS outflow dynamics, since varying the concentration of this particular drug differentially modulates brain activation. On the other hand, and without altering baroreflex sensitivity, Dexmedetomidine is known to reduce systemic sympathetic tone (Valenza *et al.*, 2014).

Furthermore, interpatient variability in response to analgesics and analgesic requirements for nociceptive stimuli should be taken into consideration (Anderson, 2020).

1.8 Nociception monitoring systems – current solutions

One of the fundamental objectives of the veterinary anesthesiologist is to detect intraoperative nociception (Gruenewald & Ilies, 2013; Mansour *et al.*, 2017) since it is well-

known that nociception due to inadequate analgesia can lead to discomfort during recovery (Rodgers *et al.*, 2000; Kehlet *et al.*, 2006). In this regard, normally when assessing pain in anesthetized animals we look forward to detecting hemodynamic reactivity, which is related to increased blood pressure and tachycardia, as well as exchanges in respiratory patterns or muscle tone. However, these modifications are not necessarily and explicitly related to pain, and they can be influenced by the anesthetic agents administrated (Hernández-Avalos *et al.*, 2019).

We require more specific tools that can allow us to assess pain in animals under this condition and guarantee early detection of hemodynamic reactivity (Hernández-Avalos *et al.*, 2019). With the purpose of quantifying the nociception–antinociception balance in the anesthetized patient in a more reliable way, using different principles and algorithms, several methods and gadgets came to be introduced in the market and were implemented *e.g.* the analysis of reflex pathways, pulse photoplethysmography, skin vasomotor reflexes *via* laser, Doppler, flowmetry, pupillometry, cerebral evoked potentials, and heart rate variability (Hernández-Avalos *et al.*, 2019). All these monitoring methods have their fors and againsts. Consequently, to the present date, there is no validated gadget that can be recommended as the device of choice for monitoring intraoperative nociception (Tiwary *et al.*, 2022).

1.9 ANI

A recent development derived from HRV with a guided assessment of the vagal activity with the underlying electrocardiographic (ECG) data, the analgesia–nociception index (ANI), (Figure 4), has been authenticated for intraoperative nociception monitoring in human anesthesiology (Ledowski *et al.*, 2014).



Figure 4 – ANI Monitor. MDoloris Medical Systems, France.

The principle of this device is to place two electrodes to the V1 and V5 positions to the chest, on each side of the heart, to get a cardiac vector. These electrodes are composed of a two-part device: a single sensor and a dual-sensor which are connected by an electrical thread (figure 5).

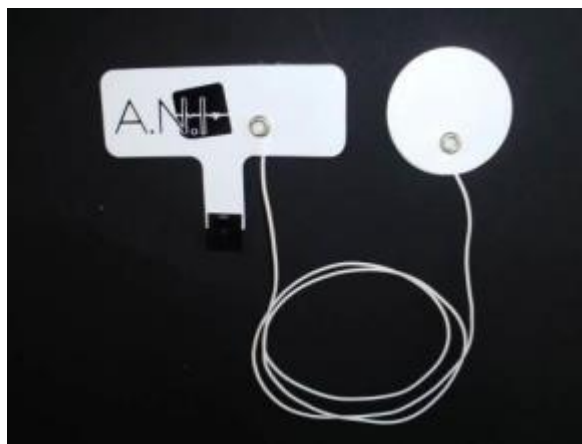


Figure 5 – ANI electrodes. Image taken from ANI monitor V1 User Manual, Société Mdoloris Medical Systems SAS, 2020.

ANI is defined as a standardized continuous measurement of the relative $p\Sigma$ tone. Each respiratory cycle induces a fast, temporary decrease of the $p\Sigma$ tone, which accounts for Respiratory Sinus Arrhythmia, and leads to a transient shortening of the R-R intervals (increased heart rate) on the ECG trace. ANI quantifies these "respiratory patterns" in order to measure the "relative quantity" of $p\Sigma$ tone. The series of normal, non-ectopic, R-R intervals is displayed on the screen of the ANI Monitor (Figure 6) after normalization, resampling and filtering (Société Mdoloris Medical Systems SAS, 2020).

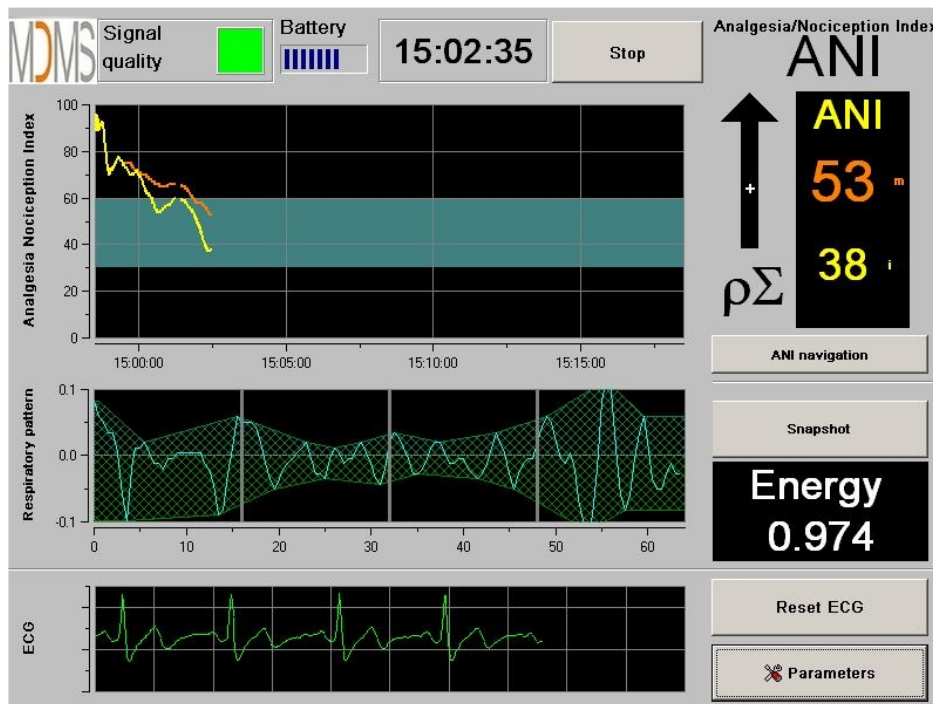


Figure 6 – ANI monitor. Image taken from ANI monitor V1 User Manual, Société Mdoloris Medical Systems SAS, 2020.

The amount of $p\Sigma$ tone is measured in relation to the total window surface through the area comprised between the lower and the upper envelope of the RR series, which is continuously displayed as a shaded area. The higher the $p\Sigma$, the higher the shaded surface, and vice versa (Société Mdoloris Medical Systems SAS, 2020).

The monitor can be used with unconscious as well as conscious patients. With unconscious patients under general anesthesia, the ANI range [50-70] relates to adequate analgesia, which means that opioid antinociception is adequate and that the parasympathetic activity is mildly predominant over sympathetic activity (Société Mdoloris Medical Systems SAS, 2020).

An ANI measurement cannot be interpreted in the following situations: arrhythmia; apnea; respiratory rate lower than 9 cycles/min; electric noise during the measurement period;

irregular spontaneous ventilation; certain types of pacemakers; heart transplant; drugs affecting the sinus node (atropine and other anticholinergic drugs, etc.), (Société Mdoloris Medical Systems SAS, 2020).

1.10 ANI clinical studies

The ANI index has been validated for use in human medicine as a non-invasive tool to assess pain during the immediate postoperative period, as it correlates significantly with pain intensity according to some scientific studies (Boselli *et al.*, 2013). It has been evaluated during general anesthesia in adults and children as an intraoperative tool and for labor pain evaluation, in addition. ANI displayed significant changes between periods with and without pain (Le Guen *et al.*, 2012).

An evaluation of the predictive value of ANI for hemodynamic changes during surgery has resulted in conflicting reports, with one group reporting the sensitivity/specificity of the score as high (88% and 83%, respectively, for ANI <55 to predict hemodynamic changes within 5 min), whilst the other showed a low predictive probability of ANI to detect changes (>10% from baseline), (Ledowski, 2019).

1.11 PTA

The ANI technology was later adapted for the monitoring of nociception in animals. The parasympathetic tone activity (PTA) monitor (MDoloris Medical Systems, France) is the veterinary equivalent of the ANI (Figure 7).

PTA is the first parasympathetic tone monitoring device in the world for animals (Société Mdoloris Medical Systems SAS, 2020). As a result, not many equivalent studies in animal medicine using the PTA index have been undertaken.



Figure 7 – PTA Monitor. MDoloris Medical Systems, France. Image taken from PTA monitor V2.3.0.0 User Manual, Société Mdoloris Medical Systems SAS, 2020.

PTA uses an algorithm equivalent to that of the ANI. Both indices assess intraoperative nociception based on the analysis of HRV to measure relative parasympathetic tone, sympathetic balance, and analgesia–nociception balance during a painful stimulus (Ledowski, 2019; Ruíz-López *et al.*, 2019).

The PTA contains software for three different species: dogs, cats and horses (Figure 8).

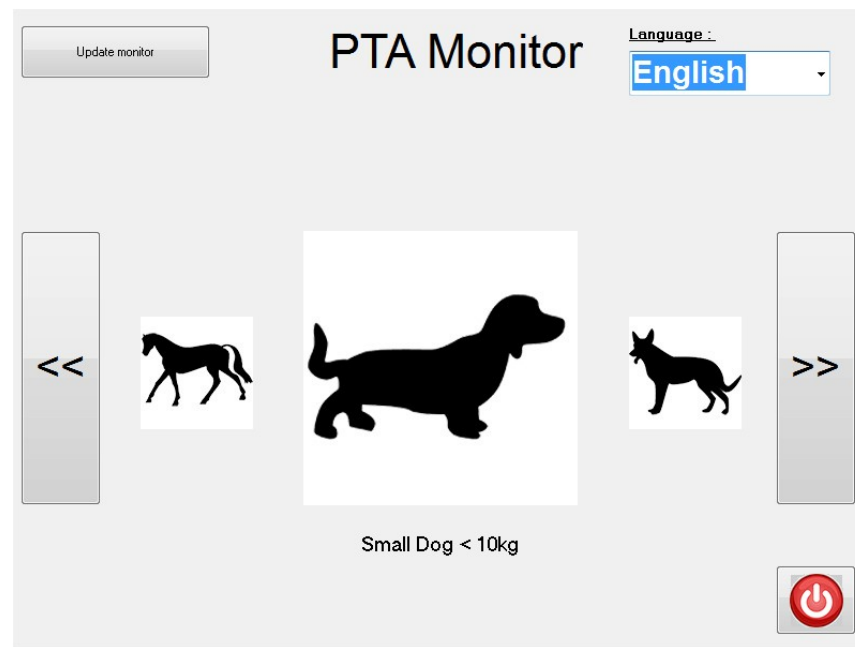


Figure 8 - PTA monitor, species selection. MDoloris Medical Systems, France. Image taken from PTA monitor V2.3.0.0 User Manual, Société Mdoloris Medical Systems SAS, 2020.

Similarly to ANI, the PTA monitor records a surface ECG (lead II) using a three-lead system with flattened crocodile clips attached to the skin. Conventionally, the most used cardiac lead is the basis-apex lead (Société Mdoloris Medical Systems SAS, 2020).

As stated by the manufacturer, PTA presents a continuous and normalized measure of the parasympathetic tone ($p\bar{\Sigma}$), which is a part of the autonomous nervous system (ANS). It uses the punctual and quick increase of $p\bar{\Sigma}$ tone induced by each respiratory cycle to measure the “relative quantity” of $p\bar{\Sigma}$ tone. These rapid changes in $p\bar{\Sigma}$ tone express in the sinus node of the heart by changes in the time intervals between two R waves of the electrocardiogram. The normal next R-R series (stemming from a cardiac cycle and not from an extrasystole) establish the R-R series. After filtering, normalization and resampling, the $p\bar{\Sigma}$ compound of the R-R series is obtained by measuring the generated surface by the respiratory cycles. The more important is the $p\bar{\Sigma}$ tone, the bigger is the measured area (Société Mdoloris Medical Systems SAS, 2020).

1.12 PTA index

The PTA index provides an objective value to anesthetists that permits them to evaluate analgesia. The monitor shows values between 0 and 100, corresponding to the percentage of activity in the parasympathetic portion of the ANS of the animal. The higher the value of the PTA index, the higher the animal’s comfort (Société Mdoloris Medical Systems SAS, 2020).

The PTA index is calculated in consonance with the following formula: $(100 * [\alpha * \text{AUCmin} + \beta] / 12.8) * 100 / 161$ where the constants $\alpha = 5.1$ and $\beta = 1.2$ have been determined in order to keep the coherence between the quantitative measurement of the index and the visual effect of the respiratory influence on R-R intervals of the electrocardiogram; 100/12.8 and 100/161 are specific coefficients determined to obtain the PTA values (Mansour *et al.*, 2017).

PTA index values were extrapolated from ANI index values. An index value of [50–70] suggests the absence of nociception (ideal PTA values); values close to 100 correspond either to an uppermost parasympathetic tone (low level of stress) or opioid overdose; finally, values below 50 correspond to a predominant sympathetic tone and are associated with a high level of stress or nociceptive pain in anesthetized animals undergoing surgical procedures (Figure 9), (Hernandez-Avalos *et al.*, 2019).

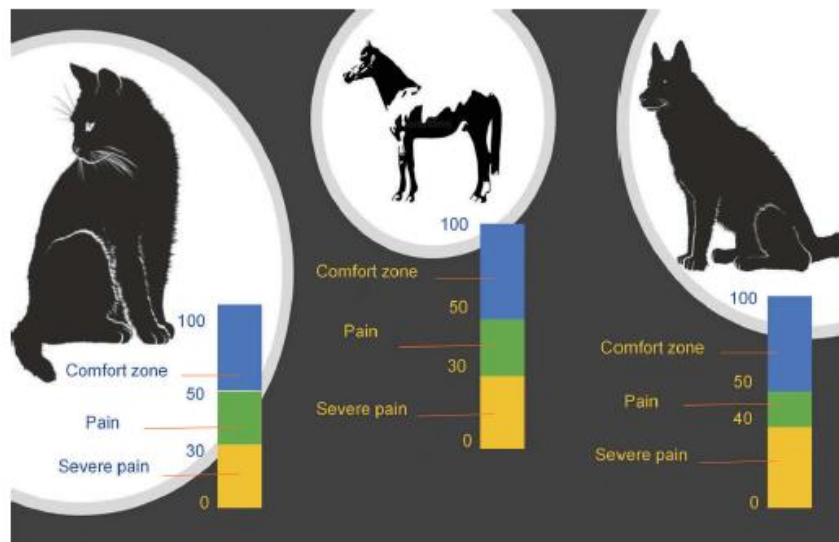


Figure 9 - Clinical interpretation of PTA values in dogs, cats and horses (Hernandez-Avalos *et al.*, 2019).

The monitor also displays two PTA values updated every second (top, right): the instantaneous PTA (PTAi), calculated on the 54 previous PTA values and the average PTA (PTAm), calculated with the 176 previous values (Figure 10), (Hernández-Avalos *et al.*, 2019; Ruíz-López *et al.*, 2019).

At the bottom of the screen, a sub-window displays the acquired ECG value (Figure 10). This ECG is filtered from all technical and physiological artifacts (e.g.: extrasystoles).

The Energy index is the signal norm acquired by the PTA monitor and is equivalent to the “autonomous nervous system’s total spectral power”. A dramatic variation of this index

means the PTA value calculated at that specific moment is not noteworthy of the patient's parasympathetic tone value (Société Mdoloris Medical Systems SAS, 2020).



Figure 10 – PTA monitor. MDoloris Medical Systems, France. Image taken from PTA monitor V2.3.0.0 User Manual, Société Mdoloris Medical Systems SAS, 2020.

1.13 PTA clinical studies

Illations on the PTA were acquired from several clinical studies, though the majority were focused on dogs.

A clinical study revealed that a dynamic variation of PTA (Δ PTA) of -18% can predict changes in the vital parameters within 5 minutes during general anesthesia in dogs using morphine as premedication (Mansour *et al.*, 2017). A 77% sensitivity and a 72% specificity have been shown in dogs submitted to a accurate assessment of the nociceptive stimuli with a consequent prediction of the hemodynamic response (Mansour *et al.*, 2017).

In a separate study, PTA was also found to be able to differentiate between antinociceptive treatments in pigs (Leitão *et al.*, 2018).

In a recent study in dogs, PTA detected low-intensity stimuli better than HR or BP, having been the hemodynamic response quicker than PTA changes to nociceptive stimuli of higher intensities (Aguado *et al.*, 2019). Additional recent experimental studies comparing the PTA monitor with cardiovascular changes in healthy dogs revealed that the PTA index could be more efficient in detecting low-intensity nociceptive stimuli than those eliciting cardiovascular alterations (Aguado *et al.*, 2020; Mansour *et al.*, 2020).

Although showing relevant results and significant changes in outcomes with their use in a wide variety of patient populations on the monitoring of nociception, these monitors aren't still widely utilized in the clinical context. One of the barriers leading to this fact is most certainly the lack of data, especially studies in cats and horses (Anderson, 2020).

Consequently, further studies are much needed to determine the usefulness of the PTA index in assessing the intraoperative nociception/antinociception balance in veterinary medicine, especially where information is lacking (Anderson, 2020).

1.14 Nociception framework on an ovariectomy

In an effort to prevent reproduction and lower ensuing overpopulation, spay-neuter programs are designed to facilitate access to population control services among targeted populations of animals (Looney *et al.*, 2008).

Elective surgical procedures such as ovariectomies and castrations provide accessible models of acute pain/nociception as the exact onset and magnitude of stimulus is well known and standardized (Garry *et al.*, 2004).

Innervation of the uterus is supplied by the pelvic plexus. Sympathetic innervation of the uterus is dichotomized through right and left hypogastric nerves. Parasympathetic innervation is supplied through pelvic nerves (Fransson, 2016). The hypogastric nerve arises from the ventral nerve roots of T12 to L3 and grant sympathetic nerve innervation. The parasympathetic innervation, defined by the nervi erigentes, arises from the S2 to S4 ventral nerve roots and establishes on the pelvic sidewall. Its target organs are the pelvic viscera smooth muscles and glands, descending colon, rectum and anal canal, ureter, urinary bladder and urethra, female genitalia and smooth muscle's blood vessels (Fletcher, 2021).

2. Materials and methods

This prospective study was performed at the FMV-ULHT Veterinary School Hospital (Campo Grande, Lisbon) in March 2022 and received the institutional approval of the Ethical Committee and Animal Welfare Commission of FMV-ULHT.

The purpose of this study was to determine the utility of the PTA index for the assessment of nociception-analgesia during the intraoperative period in female cats undergoing ovariectomy. We hypothesized that the PTA index could be used to assess a pain response following a nociceptive stimulus and that its dynamic variation would permit us to anticipate hemodynamic responses associated with nociception, as reported with ANI in

human patients, since HRV modifications precede hemodynamic responses to nociceptive stimulation (Jeanne *et al.*, 2009; Boselli *et al.*, 2015).

2.1 Animals

For the present study, we selected 49 female cats of different ages. The patients had a weight of $3.05 \text{ kg} \pm 0.64$ (mean $\pm$ standard deviation). The animals were under Vila Franca de Xira City Council's care and were submitted to a stray animal sterilization program.

The animals were received hours before the surgical procedure and evaluated for health (category ASA 1 or 2 – American Society of Anesthesiologists), through clinical and hematological examination.

Acceptance of any patient for surgery was made based on historical and physical examination findings and the program's surgical schedule.

2.1.1 Record keeping

Record-keeping procedures were standardized and complied with local practice acts and guidelines. A medical record was prepared for each animal including an animal number, body weight, physical examination findings, hematological exams performed (hemogram, glucose, total proteins), dosages of all drugs administered, routes and time of administration, responsible surgeon, surgical procedure's starting and ending time, name of the operator, anesthesia and surgery time, extubating timing, abnormalities identified and any other pertinent information regarding the animal's condition during the process (Appendix A).

2.1.2 Physical examination

For all patients, a physical examination was performed by the same veterinarian to qualify them as a surgical candidate (or not). Sex and reproductive status (sexually intact vs. neutered) were verified prior to anesthesia and surgery. Body weight was determined close to the time of surgery to guide the selection of drugs and dosages.

2.1.3 Accurate drug calculation and administration

Given the high-number nature of this spay-neuter program, standardized drug dosages were used. All patients received 20ug/kg Dexmedetomidine (Dexdomitor, Orion Corporation, Finland) and 0,3mg/kg Methadone (Semfortan, Eurovet Animal Health BV, Netherlands), as

premedication. An anesthesia record and patient-specific emergency drug calculations were made as they are important steps in preparing for potential anesthetic complications.

As part of another scientific trial, approximately 75% of these animals received locoregional anesthesia.

2.1.4 Placement of an IV catheter, Induction and Intubation

Once the patients were sedated, a cephalic vein was catheterized with a 24 gauge catheter. Anesthesia was induced by administration of 4mg/kg Propofol (Propofol Lipuro, B. Braun VetCare SA, Spain) and maintained with an Isoflurane concentration between 0,8-1%. Orotracheal intubation was performed using an appropriately sized orotracheal tube and cats were then placed in dorsal recumbency, being posteriorly connected to an anesthetic machine (Mindray WATO EX-20). Intravenous (IV) fluid therapy was started using lactated Ringer's solution at 3 mL/kg/h, administered using an infusion pump.

2.2 Surgery

All OV were performed by two experienced surgeons. The females were submitted to a conventional OV, using a median retro-umbilical celiotomy of about 3 cm in length. Ovaries and uterine horns were exteriorized manually, following permanent hemostasis and removal, as shown in Figure 11 (Langley-Hobbs *et al.*, 2014).

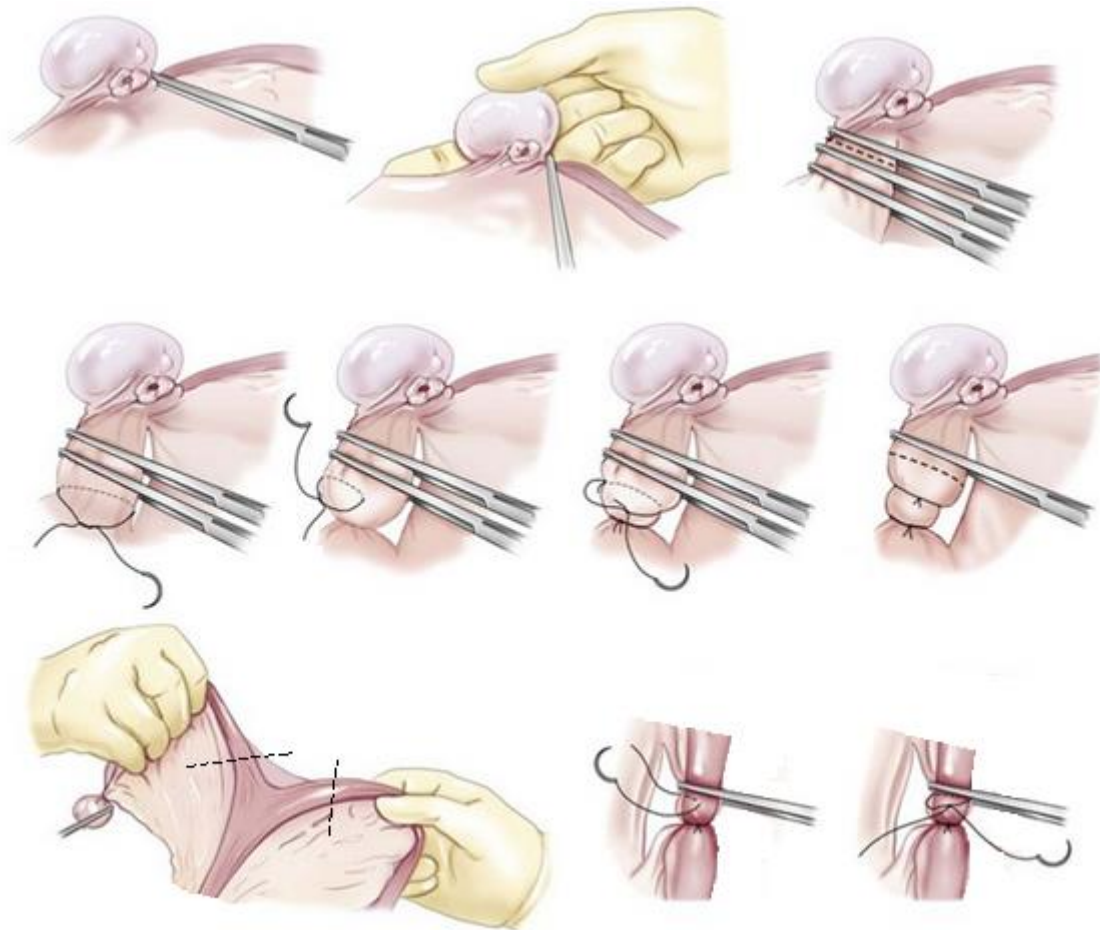


Figure 11 - Ovariectomy technique illustration. Adapted from Fransson, B. A. (2016) *Veterian Key, Ovaries and Uterus*, Chapter 109. Accessed in 20th April 2022 in <https://veteriankey.com/ovaries-and-uterus/>.

2.3 PTA monitoring

The PTA monitor displayed a graphic recording of the derivative II of the electrocardiogram (ECG), via three electrodes attached to the skin with conductive gel (Figure 12). We didn't follow the manufacturer's recommendations on these electrodes' placement in all cases, having adjusted them due to the fact that not always it was possible to get a perceptible R wave in the ECG. Predominantly the red and black electrodes were placed on the right and left forelimbs, respectively, at the level of the olecranon on the caudal aspect of the limb. The yellow electrode was placed on the right hindlimb, over the patellar ligament at the cranial face of the pelvic limb. There were some adjustments to these positions on some occasions.



Figure 12 – PTA electrodes placement on the patient. Original picture from the author.

The device's algorithm was used to calculate the PTA index. The PTA monitor was calibrated with the feline-specific coefficients already described. Once the ECG electrodes were placed, the criteria for considering a PTA index measurement valid was the monitor recording good signal quality and a minimum value of 50.

Multiparameter electronic monitors and hands-on assessment of the patient by the anesthetist were used (Figure 13). Treatment decisions were made based on information from the electronic monitors primarily, in addition to the anesthetist's assessment as well as PTAi values. The subjects were allowed to breathe spontaneously. Monitoring respiratory function included RR (rpm), oxygenation (percentage of hemoglobin saturated with oxygen [SpO₂]), and ventilation (EtCO₂). Monitoring included Systolic (SAP) and Median Arterial Pressure (MAP) (mmHg), HR (bpm) and rhythm (ECG), capillary refill time and mucous membrane color. Anesthetic depth was monitored and confirmed by the absence of palpebral reflex, absence of jaw tone (i.e., muscle relaxation), and lack of purposeful movement by the patients. Body temperature monitoring with heat supplementation starting early was guaranteed.



Figure 13 - Monitoring setup: multiparameter electronic monitor, PTA, blood pressure monitor, chronometer and data intake sheet. Original picture from the author.

2.4 Rescue analgesic medication

When cats showed a >20% increase of basal hemodynamic parameters values (adding to a PTAi value <50), rescue analgesia was administered. For this, 0,004mg/kg of Fentanyl (Fentanyl B. Braun, Germany) was used. The same two investigators performed all the measurements, administrations, and recordings.

2.5 Study design

Six pre-determined checkpoints (T_0 , T_1 , T_2 , T_3 , T_4 , T_5) were considered during surgery as of major importance to data collection, as they represented points of possible nociception induction on the animals. T_1 represents the clamping of surgical field drapes to the animal with Backhaus clamps. T_2 constitutes the opening of the abdominal cavity. T_3 stands for traction and handling of the right ovary. T_4 corresponds to traction and handling of the left ovary. T_5 expresses the closure of the abdominal cavity.

PTAi values as well as vital parameters including SAP, MAP (mmHg), HR and RR were continuously monitored and systematically collected manually. T_0 indicates baseline values for

these parameters, prior to any surgical stimulus. These values were considered means of comparison with stimulus times during surgery and were used to assess the need for analgesic rescue. At each control point, a chronometer was restarted in synchrony with the start of the surgeon's practice, to assess the elapsed time between the nociceptive stimulus and the onset of variations in PTAi and/or hemodynamic parameters.

A positive nociceptive response was defined as a change equal to or greater than 20% of pre-stimulation of the hemodynamic parameters and/or a PTAi value <50. In each animal, the stimuli were classified according to intensity and magnitude of the response: Low - no response in recorded variables (PTAi, HR, RR); Medium - only a decrease below 50 in immediate PTA was observed; or High - a decrease in immediate PTA <50 and an increase of >20% in HR or RR or both (Table 3).

Table 3 – Stimuli classification criteria in each patient according to the obtained response in PTAi, HR and RR.

Stimuli Intensity	PTAi decrease	HR increase	RR increase
Low	No	No	No
Medium	<50	No or <20%	No or <20%
High	<50	>20% in one or both variables	

The response time was defined as the time between the application of the nociceptive stimulus in each checkpoint and a positive response in PTAi, or HR and RR values. Peak values were defined as the maximum HR or RR values or the minimum PTAi values observed. The magnitude of peak response was considered as the percentage change from peak to baseline values. The time to the peak response was the time elapsed from starting the nociceptive stimulus until the peak response was observed.

2.6 Post-surgery

At the end of each procedure, Isoflurane was discontinued and extubation was performed once the animal recovered its swallowing reflex. All patients received 0,1mg/kg of Meloxicam, subcutaneously (Meloxidyl, Ceva Santé Animale, France), as well as 20ug/kg of an α_2 -antagonist (Antisedan, Orion Corporation, Finland) for the reversal of the sedative effects of Dexmedetomidine. Blood samples were collected at the end of every surgery in order to evaluate the post-surgical glucose.

Extra information about the procedure was registered on the patient's individual medical record and other relevant information regarding the process (as seen in Appendix A).

2.7 Statistical Analysis

Statistical analysis was performed using SPSS 27.0 for Windows (IBM SPSS Statistics, NY, USA). The Kolmogorov-Smirnov and the Shapiro-Wilk tests were used to evaluate the normality of the distribution of the quantitative variables. The PTA_i value and PTA_i time variables didn't follow a normal distribution and so nonparametric tests were used for these ones. For the remaining variables, parametric tests were used (RR, HR and HR time). For each time point correlation tests between PTA_i and HR/RR were made, using Pearson correlation. A p-value < 0.05 indicates statistical significance.

For each time point, a new variable "Est" was determined, where there is Nociceptive Stimulus (Medium or High-Intensity Stimulus) or No Nociceptive Stimulus (Low-Intensity Stimulus). It was then compared (Independent Student's t-test) with RR and HR of the respective moment.

To estimate differences in the response time between variables (PTA_i versus HR) an Independent Student's t-test was performed. For each pre-defined surgical time (T₁, T₂, T₃, T₄, T₅), the variation of PTA_i, HR and RR was assessed in each group. The Mann-Whitney U test was used to compare differences between the different variables in the different stimulus categories (High-Intensity Stimulus versus Medium-Intensity Stimulus).

A paired samples t-test was used to compare the means of the pre and post-surgical glucose. ANOVA test was used to determine if there was a statistically significant difference between the three created PTA categories (Low, Medium and High-Intensity stimuli) in what comes to pre and post-surgical glucose values, glucose variation (difference between pre and post-surgery glucose for the three groups) and surgery duration in order to validate the PTA even further.

3. Results

One hundred and five intraoperative PTA events (PTAi decrease below 50) were identified within the 49 investigated subjects. Four of the PTA events occurred in T₁, eight occurred in T₂, thirty-six events took place in T₃, thirty-two in T₄ and finally there were registered twenty-five PTA events in T₅. A higher amount of PTA events was encountered in T₃ (36 PTA events), followed by T₄ with 32 events (Table 4).

Table 4 – Number of PTA events by surgical checkpoints.

	T ₁	T ₂	T ₃	T ₄	T ₅	Total
PTA events	4	8	36	32	25	105

Descriptive statistical analysis for PTA in each point is detailed in Table 5, discriminating the number of animals where a PTA event occurred (PTAi < 50). On average, T₁ and T₂ have a PTAi value greater than 50, and T₃, T₄ and T₅ have a value minor to 50. PTAi registered its minimum value in T₃, as well as a minimum mean (Chart 4).

Table 5 - Descriptive analysis for PTAi in each surgical checkpoint.

Surgical checkpoints	N	Mean ± SD	Minimum	Maximum
T₁	49	64.8 ± 17.2	34	97
T₂	49	60.7 ± 18.3	32	89
T₃	49	43.5 ± 18.4	12	93
T₄	49	44.8 ± 20.9	13	92
T₅	49	48 ± 19.6	20	84

N - number of animals; SD - standard deviation

Leonora Alves Lima
Performance of the Parasympathetic Tone Activity (PTA) Index to
Assess the Intraoperative Nociception in Cats

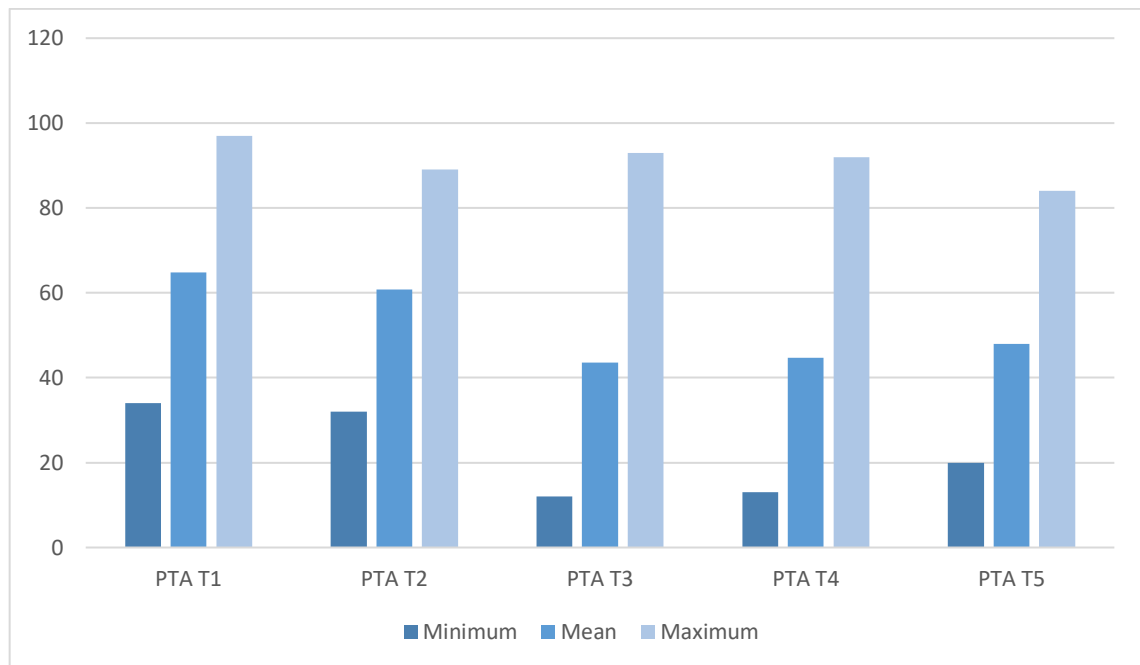


Chart 4 – Mean, maximum and minimum values for each time point PTAi.

The performance of PTA to predict hemodynamic alterations within a nociceptive stimulus was evaluated separately at each time point, using Pearson correlations between variables PTA_i, HR, RR:

T1 - There is no correlation between PTA_i x HR, PTA_i x RR and PTA_i x HR Variation;

T2 - There is a significant correlation between PTA_i x HR ($r = -0.60$), PTA_i x RR ($r = -0.58$) and these correlations are negative and moderate;

T3 - There is a negative and moderate correlation between PTA_i x HR ($r = -0.20$), significant at 5%;

T4 - There is a negative and moderate correlation between PTA_i x HR ($r = -0.34$) and between PTA_i x RR ($r = -0.48$), significant at 5%;

T5 - There is a moderate (significant at 5%) negative correlation between PTA_i x RR ($r = -0.33$).

To what concerns these correlations, the negative correlation described in T₂ to T₅ is due to the variables (PTA_i x HR and/or PTA_i x RR) tending to move in opposite size and directions from one another, such that when one increases the other variable decreases, and vice-versa.

3.1 Nociceptive Stimulus (Medium or High-Intensity Stimulus) vs No Nociceptive Stimulus (Low-Intensity Stimulus)

There were statistically significant differences in RR and HR values between the group with Nociceptive Stimulus and No Nociceptive Stimulus, showing, on average, higher values of these variables in the first one, in times T₂, T₃ and T₄. There were no statistically significant differences in RR and HR values between the group with Nociceptive Stimulus and No Nociceptive Stimulus in times T₁ and T₅ (Table 6).

Table 6 – RR and HR statistics by surgical checkpoint (Nociceptive Stimulus / No Nociceptive Stimulus).

Variable/Checkpoint	Nociceptive stimulus	N	Mean± SE	P value
RR1	Yes	4	28.50 ± 7.2	0.594
	No	12	23.25 ± 1.9	
HR1	Yes	4	121.25 ± 12.5	0.973
	No	12	120.83 ± 5.7	
RR2	Yes	8	31 ± 2.8	0.007
	No	14	21.4 ± 1.9	
HR2	Yes	8	136.5 ± 5.5	0.040
	No	14	119.6 ± 4.9	
RR3	Yes	36	27.97 ± 1.4	0.005
	No	8	18.3 ± 2.9	
HR3	Yes	36	136.4 ± 3.4	0.016
	No	8	115.6 ± 8.9	
RR4	Yes	32	24.3 ± 1.2	0.001
	No	8	15.5 ± 2.2	
HR4	Yes	32	131.8 ± 4	0.036
	No	8	113.1 ± 4.9	
RR5	Yes	25	22.7 ± 1.7	0.079
	No	11	17.5 ± 2.2	
HR5	Yes	25	125.5 ± 4.3	0.259
	No	11	116.5 ± 6.9	

N- number of PTA events < 50 (yes), >50 (no) ; SE- standard error

3.2 Medium-Intensity vs High-Intensity Stimulus

The majority of the observed stimuli had a medium intensity (PTAi <50; normal or <20% HR/RR), counting a total of 83 events (79%) against 22 events (21%) provoked by a High-Intensity Stimulus (Chart 5).

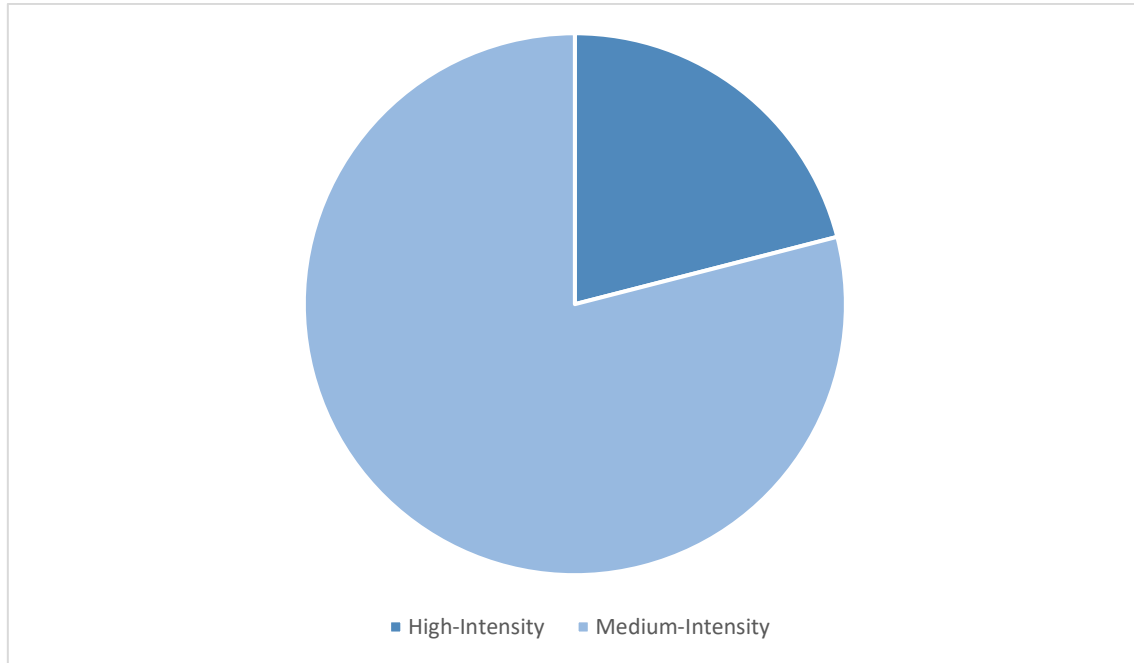


Chart 5 – High-Intensity stimuli vs. Medium-Intensity stimuli.

There were statistically significant differences between PTAi Time, RR and HR in each group (Table 7 and Chart 6).

Table 7 – PTAi, RR and HR statistics for Medium-Intensity stimuli and High-Intensity stimuli.

Variable	Nociceptive stimulus	N	Mean± SE	P value
PTAi	Medium	83	37.2± 1.3	0.536
	High	22	38.9±2.6	
PTAi time	Medium	83	79.02± 9.2	0.000
	High	22	35.32± 6.9	
RR	Medium	83	24.7± 0.9	0.008
	High	22	29.8± 1.5	
HR	Medium	83	127.84± 2.24	0.000
	High	23	146.5± 3.8	
HR time	Medium	0	-	-
	High	14	37.5± 5.02	

N- number; SE- standard error

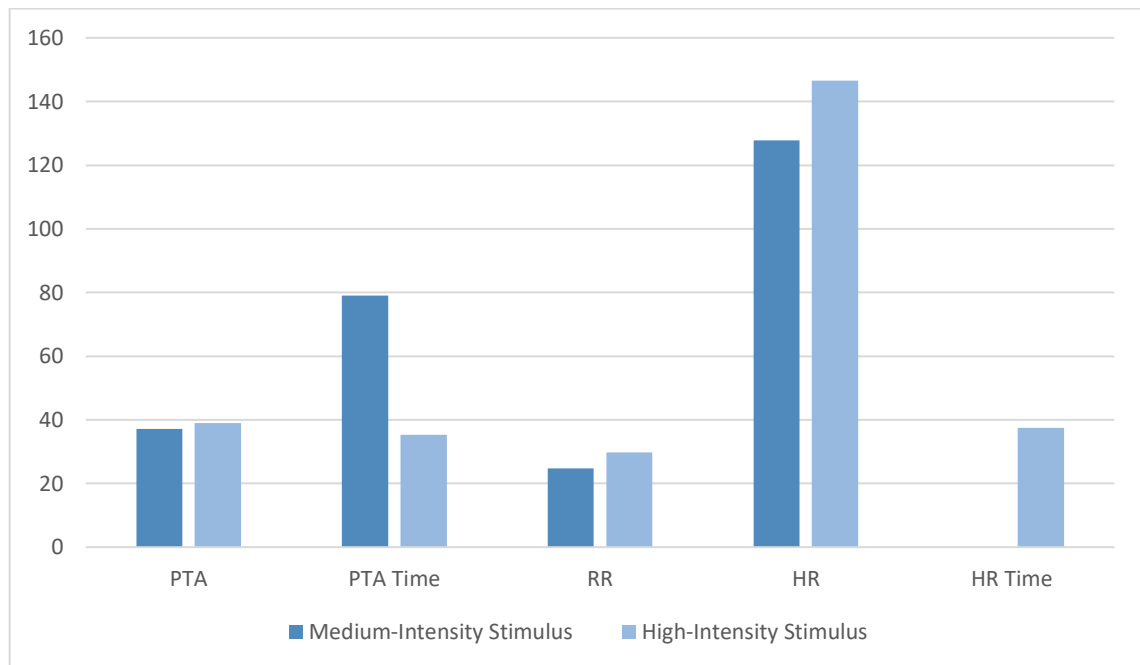


Chart 6 – Differences in means between Medium-Intensity Stimulus and High-Intensity Stimulus groups (note there is no HR variability in a Medium-Intensity Stimulus).

The following timetable was made concerning the visualization of the time discrepancies between variables once a nociceptive stimulus was applied (Chart 7).

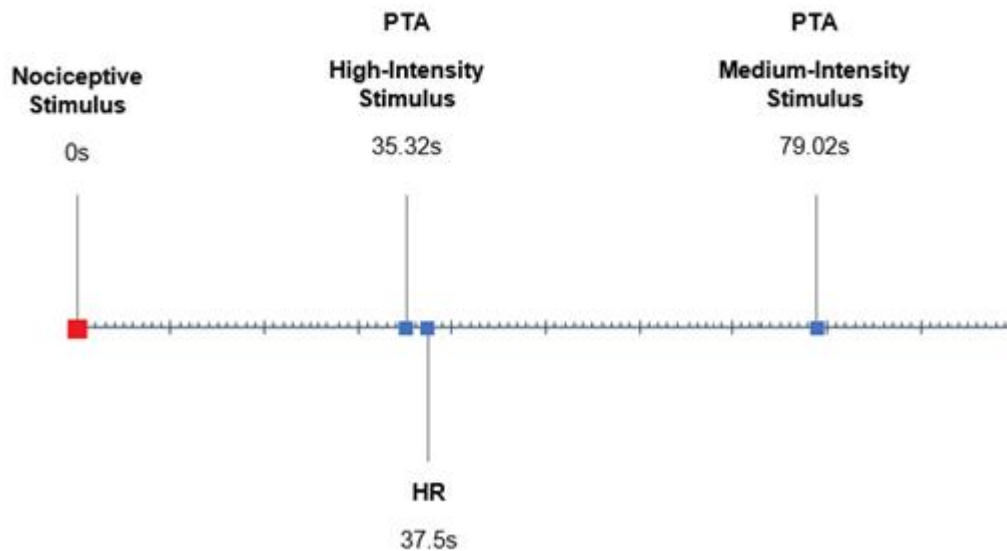


Chart 7 – Timetable showing time differences between PTAi and HR, once a nociceptive stimulus is applied.

The High-Intensity Stimuli corresponded to T₃ (traction and handling of the right ovary) and T₄ (traction and handling of the left ovary) in most cases (34,29%). Figure 14 of a PTA monitor shows two nociceptive peaks below 50, compatible with these two surgical moments.

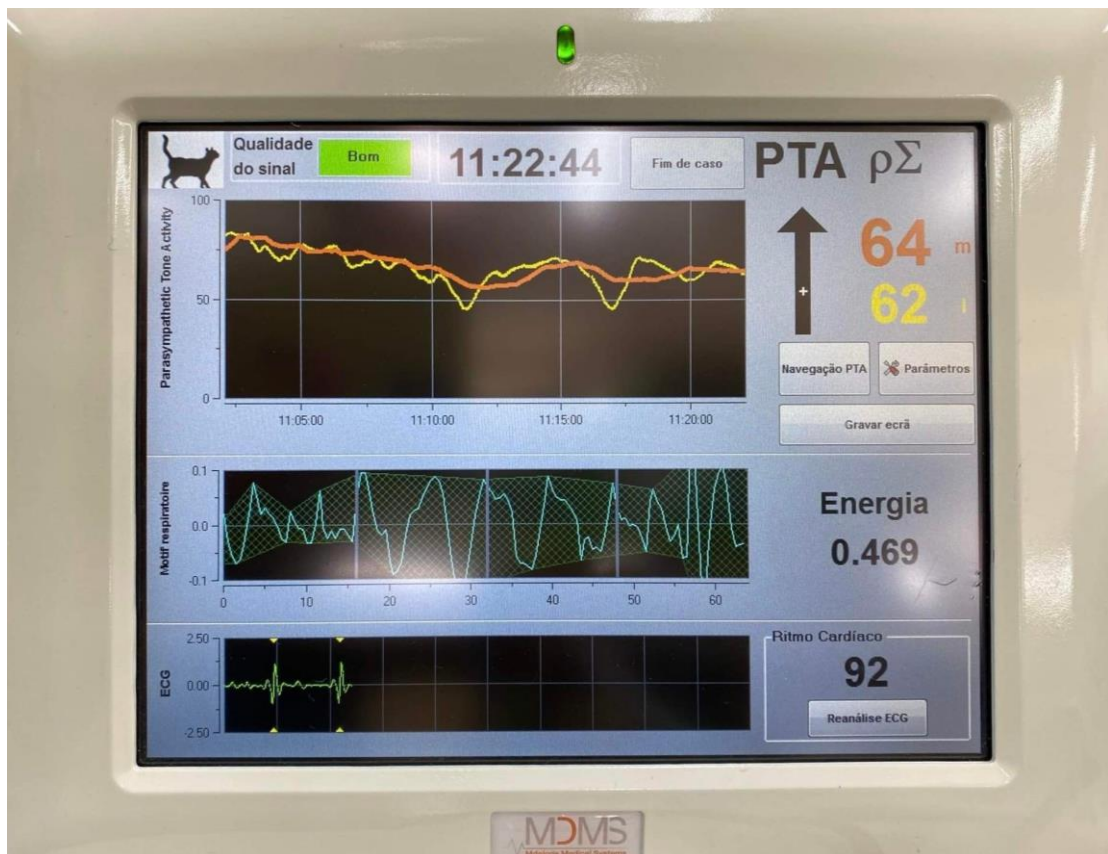


Figure 14 – Intra-surgical PTA monitoring showing two negative peaks. Original picture from the author.

3.3 Glucose

Among the 3 category groups (Low, Medium, and High-Stimulus), there was a statistically significant difference for pre-surgical glucose, but no statistically significant difference was observed for post-surgical glucose and glucose variation.

There was no statistically significant difference between groups for time to surgery and glucose change.

Pre and post-surgical glucose values for each of the 49 individuals are demonstrated in chart 8.

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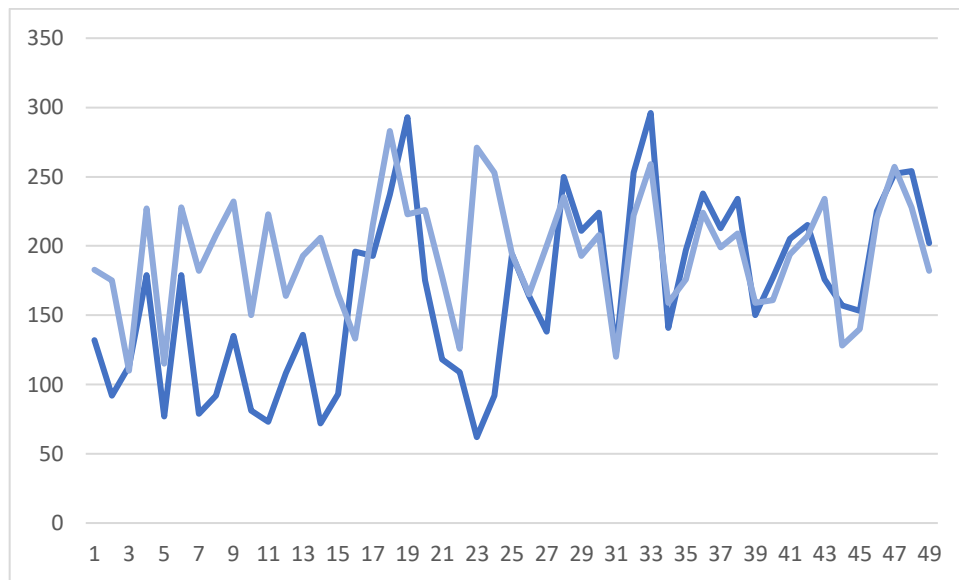


Chart 8 – Pre (dark blue) and post-surgical glucose (light blue) values by an individual.

The presence of a statistically significant difference between pre-surgical glucose (166.49 ± 62.78 mg/dL) and post-surgical glucose (194.73 ± 41.81 mg/dL) was reported, ($p=0.002$), (Table 8).

Table 8 – Pre and post-surgical glucose (mg/dL) statistics.

Glucose	N	Mean $\pm$ SE	Minimum	Maximum	P value
Pre-surgical	49	166.5 ± 8.97	62	296	0.002
Post-Surgical	49	194.73 ± 5.97	110	283	

N - number animals; SE - standard error.

The majority of the glucose samples collected are related to animals that suffered Medium-Intensity Stimuli - 26/49 (53.1%), followed by the High-Stimulus category - 18/49 (36.7%) and finally the Low-Stimulus category - 5/49 (10.2%). Among the 3 category groups (Low, Medium, High-Stimulus), there was a statistically significant difference for pre-surgical glucose, but no statistically significant difference was observed for post-surgical glucose and glucose variation.

4. Discussion

This study aimed to evaluate, in an intra-surgical setting, if the PTA index and its dynamic variation could be used to assess the analgesia/nociception balance in anesthetized cats and permit anticipation of an intraoperative hemodynamic response.

By measuring the parasympathetic tone, the PTA index aims to evaluate the balance between the parasympathetic and sympathetic aspects of the ANS. The sympathovagal balance shift post-stimulus plays a role in incrementing sympathetic activity and decreasing the parasympathetic tone. The estimation of this balance intraoperatively may reflect the analgesia/nociception balance.

In this study, only ASA 1 and 2 animals were included so that a concurrent illness would not alter their autonomic nervous system dynamics, affecting PTA readings.

The correlation observed between variables in T₂ to T₅ is due to the variables (PTAi x HR and/or PTAi x RR) tending to move in opposite sizes and directions from one another, such that when one increases the other variable decreases, and vice-versa. We can state that when the PTAi value decreases, the value of HR and RR increases. We can also affirm there is a positive and moderated correlation between HR and RR ($r=0,39$), meaning these two variables accompany each other when varying. This is concordant with a study by Mansour *et al.*, showing that a PTAi below 48 increased the probability of a hemodynamic response, and a fall of 18% predicted with an accuracy of 80% a hemodynamic response. Additionally, HR and RR varied concordantly, both having increased after a stimulus. It is possible to conclude the more intense the stimulus, the highest the cardiovascular values will be and the lowest the PTA index.

We were able to confirm the PTA suffered alterations more rapidly when the animals were under a higher intensity stimulus, which is in agreement with a study by Leitão *et al.*, showing PTA was better at detecting stimulation than HR. In the High-Intensity Stimulus group, the mean value of PTAi time ($35.32s \pm 32.35s$) is lower than the mean value of HR time ($37.50s \pm 18.76s$), suggesting the PTA took less time to variate, detecting nociception, than the variation of HR in this group. HR time didn't suffer alterations in the Medium-Intensity Stimulus group.

A different result was obtained in a study by Aguado *et al.*, where there were no evident differences in the PTA response between the Medium ($33 \pm 7s$) and High intensity ($28 \pm 7s$) stimuli in response time, the peak response magnitude and the time to peak response.

Interestingly, the High-Intensity Stimuli corresponded to T₃ (traction and handling of the right ovary) and T₄ (traction and handling of the left ovary) in most cases, allowing us to conclude that these two points are the most delicate in terms of intra-surgical monitoring and

probably require more precaution on reducing the prevalence of acute operative pain, being T₃ (right ovary) where the most PTA events were found. Additionally, it was in T₄ that PTAi showed its minimum value.

Hemodynamic variables presented lower values in the Medium-Intensity Stimulus group when compared to the High-Intensity Stimulus group. Still, the PTA monitor detected responses to these lower types of stimuli, even when they did not elicit relevant clinically observable cardiovascular changes.

In a recent experimental study performed on dogs, PTA detected Low-intensity stimuli more efficiently than the still considered to be the gold standard parameters (Aguado *et al.*, 2019). The same study concluded that the hemodynamic response to nociceptive stimuli of higher intensities was quicker than PTA changes (Aguado *et al.*, 2019). Another study compared the PTA performance with cardiovascular changes in healthy dogs and revealed also that the PTA index could be more efficient in detecting low-intensity nociceptive stimuli (Aguado *et al.*, 2020; Mansour *et al.*, 2020), which is in concordance with what we encountered in the present study, since PTA was able to detect 105 nociceptive stimuli, and HR/ RR were only able to detect 22 nociceptive stimuli (High-Intensity).

There are studies in human medicine where the activity of the parasympathetic tone is evaluated through the capacity of the ANI monitor to detect nociceptive stimulation. A significant decrease in ANI was reported after nociceptive events in a study (Ledowski *et al.*, 2014). The authors reported a poor predictive probability to indicate an increase in heart rate and blood pressure of more than 10% (Ledowski *et al.*, 2014). Another study performed on human patients using ANI reported the performance of the static value of ANI to predict an increase of more than 20 % in heart rate or systolic blood pressure, was good with an area under the Receiver Operating Characteristic (ROC) curve of 0.92, a sensitivity of 80% and a specificity of 88% and a threshold value of 63 (Jeanne *et al.*, 2014). Similar results were obtained by Gruenewald *et al.* and Sabourdin *et al.*, who concluded that ANI was more sensitive in detecting nociceptive stimuli when compared to the classical monitoring parameters.

Concerning the glucose values, we didn't find a relationship between this variable and PTAi. Post-surgical glucose values did not show any significant difference between the different categories of stimulus intensity. A comparison of the pre-surgical glucose with the post-surgical glucose revealed a statistically significant difference between them. The higher mean value in the case of postsurgical glucose may be due to the physiological response to stress induced by nociceptive stimuli in patients during the intraoperative period.

There are some limitations associated with PTA operation: artifacts and poor signal quality can lead to inappropriate PTA values. Potential artifacts can be caused by high

impedance of the source ECG collection device, muscle activity or stiffness, patient movement, improper sensor placement or electrical interference, as well as the use of medications impacting sinus node activity (atropine or other catecholamines), (Société Mdoloris Medical Systems SAS, 2020).

As with all monitored parameters, artifacts and poor signal quality may lead to inappropriate PTA values. The potential artifacts can be caused by high impedance from the source ECG collection device, muscle activity or rigidity, patient motion, improper sensor placement or electrical interference.

In most cases, it was hard to get a good signal to the PTA monitor in order to start the surgery and data collection of the animals in question. Due to this fact, not always the manufacturer's predefined placement of ECG clips was followed (yellow sensor on left forelimb; red sensor on right forelimb; black sensor on right hindlimb). We used six different placement combinations of these clips throughout the process. Also, PTA couldn't get a good signal due to the heating mat being turned on through surgery. As it is considered an effective tool for nociception assessment during surgery, and due to the necessity of maintaining the animal's body temperature in the course of it, it is considered a limitation that must be scrutinized by the manufacturer. To prevent this phenomenon, and because the procedures were relatively fast, the heating mat was left heating before every surgery and then turned off as the animal was allocated to the operating table.

The non-standardization of the analgesic protocol can be also considered a limitation since there were animals that received locoregional blocks that may have an influence on ANS blockade and therefore influence the behavior of the PTA.

In spite of having followed the same guidelines to the ovariectomies, the fact there were two distinct surgeons operating in this study must be considered a limitation, due to individual variations that could accrue from this fact. Furthermore, there were two data collection operators that too can represent a study faulty.

High inter-individual variability and random variations within subjects as well as autonomic tone changes according to patient's age are yet other confounding factors that must be taken into account. In addition, compensative drug administration or surgical stimulation and a comprehensive comparative assessment of the proposed parameters can be too quite problematic.

Research around methods for better nociception and post-operative pain detection and control continues in both human and veterinary medicine.

As this is one of the few PTA index clinical studies performed in cats, it allows a better understanding of the monitoring of analgesia-nociception balance, being a contribution to

anesthetic stability improvement and increasing knowledge on PTA application and validity in this species.

5. Conclusion

It is of utmost importance to maintain appropriate management of nociception responses during surgery, guaranteeing the animal's well-being in the course of it and in the postoperative period. Although showing relevant results on the monitoring of nociception, the PTA monitor is not yet widely utilized clinically.

In this study, PTA was faster and more reliable to identify nociceptive input when compared to HR and RR monitoring in intraoperative High-Intensity Stimulus. It has also the capacity for detecting Medium-Intensity Stimulus, which we would otherwise not be able to detect with HR and RR. This allows us to act preventively, anticipating notable changes relative to nociceptive stimuli in the intraoperative period. Being one of the few clinical studies performed in cats, the present study aimed to diminish the notable lack of data concerning the PTA in this species, showing clinically significant outcomes with its use. As it is simple to perform and has shown no associated complications,

Further studies with a larger number of animals should be made using the PTA monitor in order to obtain more reliable results, contributing to knowledge in nociception monitoring and therefore reducing the prevalence of acute operative and postoperative pain and moving towards a more directed approach to anesthesia and analgesia. Also, it would be interesting to evaluate nociception using the same PTA monitor in different surgical contexts and types and/or with different drugs administrated, in cats.

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APPENDIX

Appendix A

Patient's individual medical record.

Projeto Campanha de esterilização de animais de VFX



Data: __/__/__

Identificação do animal			
Número		Sexo	
Peso			

Exames complementares	
Hemograma	☐
Glucose	☐
PT	☐
Alterações	

Pré-medicação		
Fármacos (IM)	Dose (ml)	Hora
Dexmedetomidina (20ug/kg)		__:__
Metadona (0.3mg/kg)		__:__

Indução		
Fármaco (IV)	Dose (ml)	Hora
Propofol		__:__

Bloqueio QL			
Fármaco	Dose (ml)	Hora Direita	Hora Esquerda
Lidocaina 1%		__:__	__:__
Bupivacaina 0,25 %	☐	__:__	__:__
Sem bloqueio			

Preparação de campo	
Responsável	☐

Fentanil dose resgate	
Responsável	
Dose (0,04ml/kg)	

Monitorização	
Responsável	
PAI	☐
Início da cirurgia	__:__
Fim da cirurgia	__:__
Hora de extubação	__:__

Cirurgião	
Responsável	
Relaxamento	Sim / Não
Comentários	

Pó-operatório	
Meloxicam	☐

Método assepsia	
Clarex 2%/a. Iso	☐
Clarex 2% +Etilico 70%	☐
Clarex 1% +Etilico 70%	☐

Appendix B

The content of this thesis was presented (Poster presentation) in the XVIII Congresso Internacional Veterinário Montenegro, 4th-5th November 2022, Portugal.

PERFORMANCE OF PARASYMPATHETIC TONE ACTIVITY (PTA) INDEX TO ASSESS INTRAOPERATIVE NOCICEPTION IN FEMALE CATS UNDERGOING OVARIECTOMY *IN VIVO*

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INTRODUCTION

Detection of nociceptive stimuli responses during general anaesthesia remains a challenge. Acute changes of at least 20% in heart rate (HR) and arterial blood pressure (BP) are clinically used to assess intraoperative nociception (Mansour et al., 2017; Aguado et al., 2020). Monitoring nociception is an important objective and allows for reducing the intraoperative stress response far beyond the basic control of hemodynamic responses. HR and BP changes are affected by multiple interactions between autonomic, nervous and cardiovascular systems (Ledowski, 2019). The nociception detection allows reducing of patient discomfort at recovery as well as severe postoperative pain, morbidity and mortality (Mansour et al., 2017). Specific tools to detect nociception in cats may be of great value, since they have more susceptibility to hemodynamic instability due to their smaller body weight.

OBJECTIVES

This prospective clinical study aims to determine PTA index utility for analgesia/nociception assessment during the intraoperative period in anaesthetized cats undergoing ovariectomy (OVE). The capacity of the PTA index to anticipate cardiovascular responses associated with nociception, such as HR, following a stimulus was evaluated.

MATERIALS AND METHODES

49 female cats submitted to OVE, under the same surgical and monitoring protocols were selected. Intra surgical PTA score and HR were assessed at predefined time-points, using a calibrated with feline-specific coefficients PTA monitor (Figure 1) and multiparameter monitors: T0 (basal values), T1 (clamping of surgical field), T2 (laparotomy), T3 (right ovary handling), T4 (left ovary handling), T5 (abdominal closure). The response time was defined as the time between the application of a nociceptive stimulus in each time-point and a positive response in PTA and/or HR. Data was organized into 2 groups, according to stimulus intensities (Group 1: Medium - PTA <50, normal HR; and Group 2: High - PTA <50; HR >20%). (Aguado et al., 2020; Tribuddharat et al., 2021). Statistical analysis was performed using SPSS software (v.28.0). The results were considered statistically significant when $p \leq 0.05$.



Figure 1. PTA electrodes placement on patient and PTA monitor



Figure 2. Differences in PTA time and HR time between Groups 1 and 2 (HR values didn't suffer alterations in Group 1)

RESULTS

105 intraoperative "PTA events" (PTA decrease <50) were identified within all subjects, 79% being related to medium-intensity stimuli. HR mean value was lower in Group 1 (127.84 bpm $\pm$ 20.4 bpm) compared to Group 2 (146.52 $\pm$ 18.3 bpm). Regarding PTA response time, it was longer in Group 1 (79.02 $\pm$ 84.5s) than in Group 2 (35.32 $\pm$ 32.35s). In Group 2, the mean value of PTA Time (35.32 $\pm$ 32.35s) was lower than the mean value of HR Time (37.50 $\pm$ 18.77s). There were statistically significant differences between PTA Time and HR Time in each group ($p \leq 0.05$). (Figure 2). There was a moderate negative correlation between PTA and HR within all subjects exclusively at point T2, meaning the PTA value decreases and HR increases in the presence of nociception.

CONCLUSION

PTA monitoring was effective in detecting different intensity stimuli in cats, however time differences between groups on detecting nociception were observed, which is not consensual with a study in dogs by Aguado et al., 2020. Some factors interfered with PTA acquisition, however, PTA monitoring was faster and more reliable to identify nociceptive input when compared to HR monitoring, which is in agreement with previous studies in dogs (Mansour et al., 2017; Aguado et al., 2020). Therefore, the present study is one of the few PTA index clinical studies performed on cats, which is a valuable contribution to anaesthetic stability improvement and increasing of knowledge on PTA application and validity in cats.

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