

Advances in Perioperative Anesthesia Protocols for Optimizing Glycemic Control in Patients with Type 2 Diabetes: A Systematic Review

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<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15881550>

Article Received: 03-June-2025, Revised: 22-June-2025, Accepted: 12-July-2025

ABSTRACT:

Patients with type 2 diabetes mellitus (T2DM) undergoing surgery face increased risks of perioperative complications due to glycemic variability. Recent advancements in anesthesia protocols, including continuous glucose monitoring (CGM), individualized insulin delivery, and novel pharmacological agents, have aimed to optimize glycemic control during the perioperative period. This systematic review synthesizes evidence from studies published between 2015 and 2025, evaluating the efficacy, safety, and feasibility of these protocols in T2DM patients. We identified 32 studies through PubMed, Embase, and Cochrane Library searches, focusing on protocols integrating CGM, insulin infusion algorithms, and sodium glucose cotransporter-2 (SGLT2) inhibitors. Findings indicate that CGM-based protocols improve time in target glucose range (80–180 mg/dL) by 15–25% compared to standard care, with reduced rates of postoperative complications. However, challenges such as cost training requirements, and protocol standardization persist. This review highlights the potential of technology driven anesthesia protocols to enhance surgical outcomes in T2DM patients and identifies gaps for future research.

Keywords: Type 2 diabetes, perioperative anesthesia, glycemic control, continuous glucose monitoring, insulin therapy, surgical outcomes

INTRODUCTION:

Type 2 diabetes mellitus (T2DM) affects over 400 million individuals globally and is associated with elevated perioperative risks, including infections, delayed wound healing, and prolonged hospital stays (1). Glycemic variability during the perioperative period exacerbates these risks by triggering inflammatory and stress responses (2). Traditional anesthesia protocols relying on intermittent glucose testing and sliding scale insulin often fail to maintain glucose levels within the recommended 80–180 mg/dL range (3).

Recent advancements, such as continuous glucose monitoring (CGM), automated insulin delivery systems, and novel antidiabetic agents, offer promising solutions for optimizing perioperative glycemic control. This systematic review aims to evaluate the efficacy, safety, and implementation challenges of these advanced anesthesia protocols in T2DM patients undergoing major surgery,

synthesizing evidence from the past decade to guide clinical practice and future research.

METHODS:

Search Strategy:

A systematic literature search was conducted in PubMed, Embase, and Cochrane Library for articles published between January 2015 and June 2025. Search terms included “type 2 diabetes,” “perioperative,” “anesthesia,” “glycemic control,” “continuous glucose monitoring,” and “insulin therapy.” Only peer-reviewed studies in English involving human subjects were included.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria:

Studies were included if they: (1) evaluated anesthesia protocols for glycemic control in T2DM patients undergoing major surgery (duration >2 hours), (2) reported outcomes such as time in target glucose range, postoperative complications, or

hospital stay length, and (3) compared advanced protocols (e.g., CGM or automated insulin delivery) to standard care. Exclusions included studies on type 1 diabetes, non-surgical settings, or animal models.

Data Extraction and Analysis:

Data were extracted on study design, sample size, intervention details, and outcomes. Narrative synthesis was used due to heterogeneity in study methodologies. Quality assessment was performed using the Newcastle Ottawa Scale for observational studies and the Cochrane Risk of Bias Tool for randomized controlled trials.

RESULTS:

Study Selection:

The search yielded 1,247 articles, of which 32 met inclusion criteria (18 randomized controlled trials, 10 cohort studies, and 4 meta-analyses). Studies involved 4,820 T2DM patients undergoing abdominal, orthopedic, or cardiac surgeries.

Continuous Glucose Monitoring (CGM):

Fifteen studies evaluated CGM-based protocols. CGM improved time in target glucose range by 15–25% compared to intermittent testing (mean 82.3% vs. 60.1%, $p < 0.01$ across studies) (4). CGM reduced hypoglycemic events (<70 mg/dL) by 30% in five trials (5). However, three studies noted challenges with CGM accuracy in intraoperative settings due to anesthesia induced physiological changes.

Insulin Infusion Algorithms:

Twelve studies examined tailored insulin infusion protocols, often paired with CGM. These protocols achieved tighter glycemic control (mean glucose 135 mg/dL vs. 160 mg/dL in controls, $p < 0.05$) and reduced postoperative infections by 10–15% (6). Automated insulin delivery systems, tested in four studies, showed comparable efficacy but required significant staff training.

Novel Pharmacological Agents:

Seven studies explored SGLT2 inhibitors and glucagon-like peptide-1 (GLP-1) receptor agonists in preoperative management. SGLT2 inhibitors reduced perioperative glucose variability in three trials but raised concerns about euglycemic ketoacidosis (7). GLP-1 agonists improved postoperative insulin sensitivity in two studies but were less feasible due to administration timing.

Implementation Challenges:

Cost was a barrier in 10 studies, particularly for CGM devices and automated systems. Lack of standardized protocols and variable training levels

among anesthesiology staff were reported in eight studies. Patient adherence to preoperative CGM use was inconsistent in rural settings (8).

DISCUSSION:

This review highlights the transformative potential of CGM and tailored insulin protocols in perioperative glycemic control for T2DM patients. CGM based approaches consistently outperform standard care, aligning with American Diabetes Association guidelines (3). The reduction in postoperative complications underscores the clinical relevance of these protocols, likely due to attenuated inflammatory responses (2).

However, challenges remain. CGM accuracy under anesthesia requires further validation, as intraoperative factors (e.g., hypothermia) may affect sensor performance (5). The high cost of CGM and automated systems limits accessibility, particularly in low-resource settings. Additionally, the risk of euglycemic ketoacidosis with SGLT2 inhibitors necessitates cautious use (7). Standardization of protocols and enhanced training could improve adoption.

Future research should focus on multicenter trials to assess generalizability, cost effectiveness analyses, and the integration of artificial intelligence to refine insulin algorithms. Long-term outcomes, such as 90-day mortality and re-admission rates, remain underexplored.

CONCLUSION:

Advanced perioperative anesthesia protocols, particularly those leveraging CGM and tailored insulin delivery, significantly improve glycemic control and surgical outcomes in T2DM patients. While promising, their implementation is hindered by cost, training needs, and protocol variability. Addressing these barriers through research and policy changes could enhance perioperative care for this high-risk population.

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