Meeting in the Middle: A Combined Transvaginal and Transrectal Repair for Rectovaginal Fistulas

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BACKGROUND

- Rectovaginal fistulas (RVFs) are defined as low rectal or anal fistulas that epithelialize to the vagina.
- Surgical repair remains the primary treatment, though approaches vary and include transvaginal, transrectal, and transabdominal techniques.
- We present a novel technique that incorporates both transvaginal and transrectal repair.

METHODS/INTERVENTIONS

- Medical records from an urban, single-institution tertiary care center from 2018 - 2025 were reviewed.
- Patients who underwent RVF repair using a combined approach by CRS (transrectal) and Gynecology (transvaginal) were included.

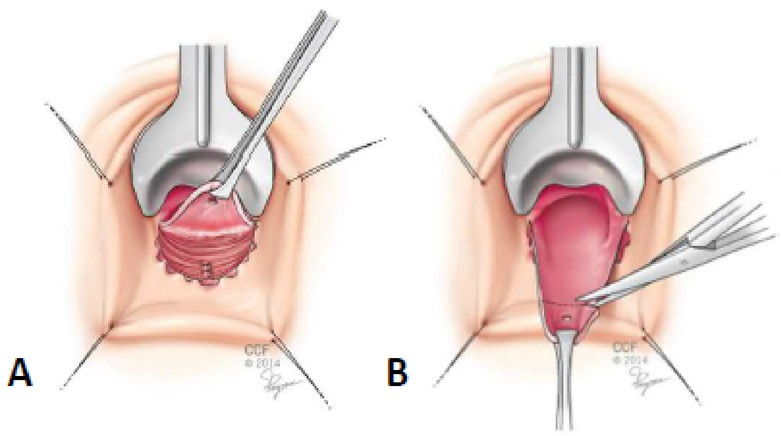


Figure 1. Transrectal repair of a fistula tract.[a] **(A)** The fistula tract is debrided and closed. **(B)** The distal end of the mucosal flap is trimmed and advanced for closure.

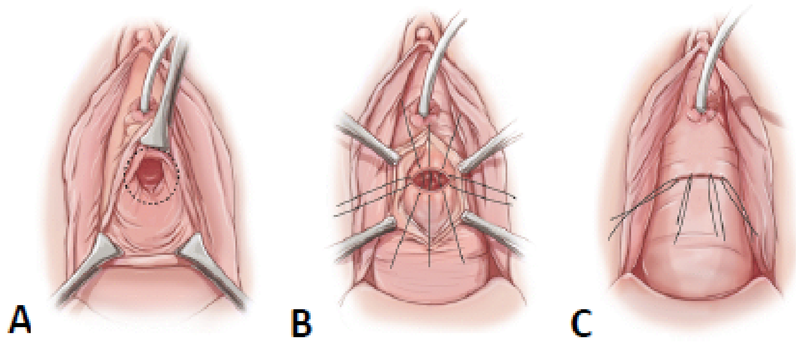


Figure 2. Transvaginal repair of a fistula tract.[b] **(A-B)** A circumferential incision is made to excise the fistula tract. **(C)** The vaginal epithelium is closed in layers.

RESULTS/OUTCOMES

- A total of eleven patients underwent the combined RVF repair approach.
- None experienced recurrence during the study period.
- The average duration from surgery to last follow-up was 85 days (range 14-282 days).
- No patients had a history of smoking. The average BMI was 30.89 kg/m².

DISCUSSION

- This small retrospective case series demonstrated no recurrence up to 85 days (range 14-282 days) postoperatively.
- RVFs are relatively uncommon, with reported recurrence rates ranging from 50% to 85%. Patients frequently require multiple procedures to achieve complete healing.
- Given our 0% recurrence rate compared with previously reported data, a combined transrectal and transvaginal approach involving both CRS and Gynecology should be considered a potential standard of care.

#ASCRS26 ASCRS ANNUAL SCIENTIFIC MEETING Tampa, FL | May 9-12, 2026

aGoldstone, Robert MD. Cleveland Clinic Illustrated Tips and Tricks in Colon and Rectal Surgery. Annals of Surgery 272(6):p e333, December 2020. | DOI: 10.1097/SLA.0000000000004359 bhttps://obgynkey.com/vaginal-fistula-repairs/