**Topic:** Doctor: “I FEEL A LUMP IN MY THROAT”

**Title:** Thyroid pathology and the globus symptom: are they related? A two year prospective trial.

**Authors:** Burns P & Timon C (Dublin, Ireland)


---

**SUMMARY**

**Context:** The globus sensation is a constant feeling of a lump in the throat and may be associated with thyroid enlargement.

**Objective:** A two year prospective study was set up to ascertain the relationship between thyroid pathology and globus symptoms.

**Patients and Methods:** All patients undergoing thyroid surgery over a two year period were included. Patients were questioned pre- and post-operatively. Globus symptoms scores were recorded using a visual analogue scale. The size, weight and histological features of the removed specimens were correlated and statistical analysis performed.

**Results:** Two hundred patients were included in the study; 58 were symptomatic for globus pharyngeus preoperatively, and 80% of these patients’ symptoms resolved postoperatively (P<0.0001). Patients with histological features of inflammation showed the greatest improvement.

**Conclusion:** As many as one third of patients with a thyroid mass will complain of a globus-like symptom. Patients undergoing thyroid surgery, who are symptomatic for globus pharyngeus, can expect that their symptoms will improve following surgery.

---

**COMMENT**

How many times have we heard in our consultation: “Docteur j’ai la sensation d’avoir une boule dans ma gorge” (in Nederlands: dokter, ik voel een zwelling in mijn keel). The globus pharyngeus symptom refers to a complaint of a ‘lump’ sensation in the throat, with a negative physical examination of the pharynx and neck.

The present study was prospective in design and carried out in one homogeneous surgical unit. A visual analogue scale (VAS) was used to grade symptoms pre- and postoperatively (between 0 and 10). Results showed a clear decrease in symptoms postoperatively, with VAS decreasing from 5.2 to 1.1. The decrease was even more pronounced in patients with ‘inflammation’. Among those patients with globus-like symptoms, histological diagnoses were: multinodular goitre (N=30), colloid goiter (N=9), follicular adenoma (N=7), carcinoma (N=6), etc. Also, the weights of resected tissue were less than 30 g (N=17/58; 29%), 30-100 g (31/58; 53%), and greater than 100 g (N=10/58; 17%), indicating that a relatively large proportion of these patients had large goitres.

(Daniel Glinoer, M.D.; Ph.D.)
See Figure below

![Graph showing VAS globus scores](image)

**Fig. 1**

Patients’ mean pre-operative (pre-op) and post-operative (post-op) visual analogue scale (VAS) scores for globus pharyngeus.