Chronic Pancreatitis Operations

Operations to treat complications of chronic pancreatitis are done for a variety of reasons. The most common reason surgical treatment is undertaken is to treat pain associated with chronic pancreatitis.

One successful operation, known as the Puestow procedure, improves the drainage of the pancreas by draining the pancreatic duct into the small intestine. Another common procedure is to remove part of the diseased pancreas that has obstructed the pancreatic ducts. These procedures include removal of the head of the pancreas (the Whipple procedure) or removal of the tail and body of the pancreas (called a distal pancreatectomy).

Occasionally, drainage and partial removal procedures are combined (the Frey procedure). In some cases, the entire pancreas needs to be removed. This is called a total pancreatectomy. Currently, an exciting area in surgery (for chronic pancreatitis) combines removal of the entire pancreas with transplantation of the pancreatic cells that produce insulin in order to prevent diabetes. This is known as an islet cell autotransplantation.