Short Communication

Malunited proximal third tibia fracture treated with open reduction and internal fixation surgery with a raft plate using the early stage callus as a potential autograft

Rohil Singh Kakkar¹,* Parimal Kore², Anirudha Deshpande²

¹ Dept. of Orthopaedic Surgery, Sahyadri Hospital, Pune, Maharashtra, India
² Dept. of Orthopaedic Surgery, Ruby Hall Clinic, Pune, Maharashtra, India

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A B S T R A C T

The incidence of proximal tibia fractures occur only in 5%-11% of all tibia shaft fractures and often result from high impetus trauma commonly seen in motor vehicle accidents. Repairing a bone defect, healing of a nonunion, or surgery for the malunited fracture often requires bone grafting. There is a notable interest among orthopaedic surgeons to learn whether the bone callus can be used as an autograft material.

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1. Introduction

The incidence of proximal tibia fractures occur only in 5%-11% of all tibia shaft fractures and often result from high impetus trauma.¹ Conservative management of such fractures by cast application leads to extended immobilization of knee and ankle has often resulted in malunion, nonunion, procurvatum, rotational deformity or stiffness of adjacent joints hampering the quality of mobility of the patients. Bone callus is often removed and discarded, especially in second stage surgery in the cases of malunion.² Repairing a bone defect, healing of a nonunion, or surgery for the malunited fractures often requires a bone graft using autologous bone harvested from the iliac crest.³ Nevertheless, performing such grafts is complicated by the subsidiary surgery required to obtain the bone graft associated with infection, related donor site pain and unsightly scars.⁴–⁶ Bone callus forms along with fracture healing, which is a process involving a complex interplay of cells, growth factors, and extracellular matrix.⁷,⁸ At the cellular level, chondroblasts and osteoblasts are involved in callus formation.⁸–¹⁰ Also, bone callus tissue is non-immunogenic and histocompatible, reducing the perils of transmitting diseases when used as grafting material.⁹–¹⁶

2. The Presentation

This article presents a study of 26 year old male with 3 months old malunited proximal third tibia fracture following a motor vehicle accident which was treated conservatively by a quack outside at that time and presented to us for definitive management of a fracture malunion with bridging callus associated with 11° of varus deformity. Post surgery, the patient was followed for 9 months and evaluated based on radiological outcomes through xrays and functionally by Knee Society Scoring(KSS).
2.1. Biomechanical Assessment prior to the surgery

Knee joint examination and rom - painful flexion not more than 40°.
- Inability to bear weight,
- Gait Disturbance,
- Shortening > 2 cms,
- Fracture Geometry and Overlapping (Then and now),
- Varus Deformity : 11°,
- Presence of external rotation deformity and
- Malalignment of hip-knee-ankle angle (Mechanical axis).

After functional and radiological assessment, considering the patient’s age and functional demand, we decided to perform open reduction and internal fixation of proximal third tibia and deformity correction surgery with a raft plate using the early stage callus as a potential autograft.

Before the surgical intervention, patient underwent routine investigations, obtained anaesthetic, informed consent clearance, medical fitness and adequate antibiotic dosage.

Fracture site was exposed through standard antero-lateral curvilinear incision, previously formed callus extracted through a bone nibbler, freshening up of the fracture ends done followed by appropriate reduction through axial traction, valgus force and reduction clamp under c-arm image intensifier followed by internal fixation with a proximal tibial raft plate along with screws according to the fracture geometry and stability. The extracted callus was then made into small chunks and re-inserted through artery forceps in the bone void(Figure 4). Closure was done in layers.

Fig. 1: AP and lateral radiographs just after the road traffic accident illustrating displaced spiral proximal third tibia fracture for which surgery was advised but patient refused for the same

3. Result

Radiography series from immediate post operative till 9 months post surgery illustrating excellent union, adequate alignment(deformity correction considering previous varus, external rotation and unaligned mechanical axis) and functional assessment was done using Knee Society Score (KSS) which was 82/100 depicting good to excellent overall

Fig. 2: AP and lateral radiographs at 3 months following the injury illustrating a proximal third fracture malunion with 11° of varus deformity

Fig. 3: AP and lateral radiographs at 3 months following the injury illustrating a proximal third fracture malunion with 11° of varus deformity

Fig. 4: Intra operative images
outcome (Figures 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11).

4. Discussion
A standard post operative protocol was followed considering adequate antibiotics, analgesics and physiotherapy rehabilitation. As the construct was considered to be stable, partial weight bearing walking with a walker was allowed from the second post operative day. Full weight bearing was allowed only after complete clinical and radiological union which occurred at 12th week post surgery with Knee Society Score of 82. The patient was followed till 9 months post surgery. X-ray series were compared to evaluate the
5. Conclusion

We present a study in which the bone defect was filled with early stage callus and favorable bone fusion was achieved with callus, suggesting that this treatment method overcomes the disadvantages of autogenous bone graft, such as pain at the donor region, in patients in whom a sufficient amount of callus can be collected. In such cases, early stage callus should be considered as a potential bone graft substitute as it promotes union by expressing osteoinductive factors. Although, the technique is useful in limited cases with prerequisite such as small bone defect sizes and sufficient callus formation. Further studies are needed with a large database of cases.

6. Source of Funding

Nil.

7. Conflict of Interest

Nil.

References


**Author biography**

**Rohil Singh Kakkar** Senior Resident

**Parimal Kore** Consultant

**Anirudha Deshpande** Consultant

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