The outcomes of acetabular fractures treated surgically and factors affecting the result

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Abstract
Aim: The aim of this study was to evaluate the radiological and clinical outcomes of surgically treated acetabular fractures. Material and Method: A total of 30 patients with acetabular fracture who had presented to the Orthopedics and Traumatology Department of Yüzüncü Yıl University Medical Faculty between January 2009 and December 2013 and undergoing surgery were included in the study. The number of males was 25 (83.3%), and the number of females was 5 (16.7%). The ages of the patients varied between 18 and 68 (mean: 40) years. The indications for surgery were: more than 3 mms of dislocation in one of the three X-Rays obtained (antero-posterior, obturator oblique and iliac oblique), intra-articular piece of the fracture and posterior instability. Results: 20 (66.7%) and 10 (33.7%) patients had acetabular fractures in the right and left hips, respectively. The most common cause of trauma was falling from a height. According to the classification of Letournel, 18 patients (60%) had complex and 12 patients (40%) had simple fractures. 13 patients (43.5%) had additional traumatic hip dislocation. Following the surgical intervention, 13 patients (43.3%) had anatomical reduction and 4 (13.3%) had poor reduction. The patients were followed-up for a mean duration of 28 months. According to the radiological criteria of Matta, 13 patients (43.3%) had excellent, 11 (36.6%) had good, 4 (13.3%) had moderate, and 2 (6.6%) had poor outcomes. According to the clinical recovery criteria of Merle d’Aubigne and Postel, 7 patients (23.3%) had very good, 15 (50%) had good, 4 (13.3%) had moderate, and 4 (13.3%) had poor outcomes. Discussion: It was concluded that the quality of reduction affected the clinical and radiological outcomes, and that this effect depended on the simple or complex nature of the fracture. Successful and satisfactory results may be obtained by selecting the correct incision method for the fracture type, advanced surgical experience and careful post-operative patient follow-up.

Keywords
Acetabular Fracture; Clinical Outcome; Radiological Outcome; Letournel Classification

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Introduction

Acetabular fractures are observed as a result of high energy traumas. Recent increases in the number of car accidents have increased the frequency of acetabular fractures as well. Acetabular fractures are more complicated compared to other regions of the body, and their treatment necessitates a better experience. Until the last quarter of the last century, acetabular fractures were mostly treated via conservative methods [1]. However, immobilization-related systemic complications were encountered. Fractures united as malunion resulted in arthrosis. Following the definition and classification of acetabular fractures, and contribution to the surgical approach and reduction techniques of the French surgeon Emile Letournel, the surgical treatment of displaced acetabular fractures has gained extensibility all over the world [2].

The aim of the surgical approach in acetabular fractures is to achieve complete anatomical reduction in the innominate bone and the acetabular joint surface. However, providing acetabular reduction is generally difficult due to the 3-dimensional anatomy of the acetabulum and the pelvis. Improper reductions may impair the articular functions in acetabular fractures. Even millimetric displacements may lead to progressive post-traumatic osteoarthrosis [3].

In this study, we evaluated the surgical outcomes in 30 patients undergoing open reduction and internal fixation through surgical intervention under the light of the literature.

Material and Method

A total of 30 patients undergoing surgery due to acetabular fracture in the Orthopedics and Traumatology Department of Yüzüncü Yıl University Medical Faculty between January 2009 and December 2013, among 50 patients with sufficient follow-up duration and accessible file data, were included in the study. The duration of follow-up was between 6 and 56 months (mean: 28). The number of males was 25 (83.3%) and the number of females was 5 (16.7%). The ages of the patients differed between 18 and 68 (mean: 40) years. Twenty patients had right (66.7%) and 10 patients had left acetabular fractures. The etiological reasons included: falling from a height in 13 patients (43.3%), in-vehicle traffic accident in 8 (26.6%) (ICTA), out-of-vehicle traffic accident in 4 (10%) (OCTA) and being trapped under a wreckage in 2 (6.6%).

Examination in the emergency unit included evaluation of an additional hand injury, hip dislocation or ischiatric nerve injury. On admission, all patients with acetabular fractures underwent antero-posterior pelvic X-Rays, and 45-degree oblique pelvic X-Rays (obturatori and iliac) defined by Judet [4]. The fractures of all patients were classified according to the criteria of Judet and Loutetmeur [5] with the help of the X-Rays and computed tomography (CT) images prior to the surgery (Image 1). Until the surgical intervention, 28 patients were followed-up with skeletal traction and 2 with cutaneous traction. Post-op skeletal traction was performed on only one patient. The mean duration between the date of the accident and surgery was 5.5 days (distribution: 1-13 days) and the mean duration of hospital stay was 12 days (distribution: 6-23 days).

Administration of low molecular weight heparin was begun for all patients for thromboembolism prophylaxis. Antibiotics prophylaxis was provided for all patients prior to surgery. All patients were told to wear antiembolism stockings in the postoperative period.

Physiotherapy including isometric exercises was begun right after the surgery in all patients undergoing stable osteosynthesis. The patients were mobilized using double crutches until the 6th week without weight bearing. From the 6th week, they were mobilized with partial weight bearing until the 12th week. They were permitted to walk without crutches with complete weight bearing after the 12th week.

The qualities of the reduction and internal fixation were evaluated using post-op A-P pelvis and Judet X-Rays (Image 2). Matta’s radiological criteria were used to evaluate the radiological data. Matta’s modified criteria of Merle d’Aubigne and Postel were used for the clinical evaluation [5,6]. Brooker’s classification was used in heterotrophic ossification follow-ups [7].

Results

Additional organ-fracture involvement was present in 19 (63.3%) patients. Among these, 16 had one or more additional bone fractures. Two patients had thoracic and 1 patient had orbital injuries.

According to the classification of Letournel, 12 of the fractures (40%) were simple (elementary) and 18 (60) were complex. Seven of the simple fractures (23.3%) were posterior wall, 3 (10%)...
were transverse, and 2 (6.6%) were posterior column fractures. Two of the complex fractures (6.6%) were posterior wall and column fractures, 4 (13.3%) were transverse and posterior wall fractures, 4 (13.3%) were T-type fracture, 2 (6.6%) were anterior column and posterior hemitransverse fractures, and 6 (20%) were fractures of both column.

According to the evaluation of fracture reductions of 30 patients undergoing the operation, 43.3% (13 patients) had anatomical reduction, 43.3% had (13 patients) successful reduction, and 13.3% (4 patients) had poor reduction. The quality of the reduction differed according to the structure of the fracture as simple or complex. 12 of 30 patients had simple fracture and 10 (83.3%) were evaluated as anatomical reduction. Among the 18 complex fractures, 3 (16.6%) were evaluated as anatomical reduction, 4 patients evaluated as poor reduction belonged to the complex type.

Table 1. presents the relationship between the quality of reduction and clinical evaluation criteria of Merle d’Aubigne and Postel.

Table 2. Relationship between the quality of reduction and clinical evaluation criteria of Merle d’Aubigne and Postel.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reduction</th>
<th>Anatomical</th>
<th>Successful</th>
<th>Poor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intra clinical</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Intra radiology</td>
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Eight patients among all patients had hip dislocation. Heterotrophic ossification was observed in 8 patients (26.6%) during the follow-up period. Among those, 5 were stage 1, 1 was stage 2, and 2 were stage 3 according to the classification of Brooker. Ischiadic nerve deficit was observed in 3 patients (10%) preoperatively. Among these, 1 showed complete recovery during the follow-up. Ischiadic nerve deficit developed in 1 patient as a complication. In the 12th month visit of this patient, ischiadic nerve sensory site was observed to be healthy, but motor deficit persisted.

Femoral vein injury developed during the ilio-inguinal approach in a patient and repair was performed by the surgeons of the Cardiovascular Surgery Department. No problem was observed during the follow-up.

Deep vein thrombosis developed in the post-operative follow-up of a patient who was 68 years old. Complete recovery was observed in the 9th month visit of this patient.

Post-traumatic arthritis was observed in 4 patients (13.3%) and avascular necrosis was observed in 2 patients (6.6%) during the post-operative long term follow-up period.

Discussion

Treatment of acetabular fractures forms a difficult part of developing orthopedics and necessitates a serious learning curve [8]. As in all intra-articular fractures, acetabular fractures necessitate anatomical restorations in order to prevent a possible arthritis in the future [3].

Zhu et al. have demonstrated a significant relationship between hip dislocation and the prognosis [9]. In the long-term study of Lichte et al., a significant relationship was determined between hip dislocation and the radiological outcomes [10]. In our study, 8 patients had posterior dislocation. No significant relationship was determined between the presence of a posterior dislocation and the radiological outcomes.

Delays of three weeks or longer in the treatment of acetabular fractures via open reduction or internal fixation may result in iatrogenic nerve injuries at a rate of 12% [11]. Letournel and Judet [4] reported the rate of iatrogenic nerve injury following surgery via Kocher-Langenbeck incision in the first term as 18.4%, which regressed to 3.3% with the experience in time.

Matta et al. [12] reported that iatrogenic nerve injury rates had regressed from 9% to 3.5% with the experience gained in time. In our study, post-operative ischiadic nerve deficit developed in one patient (3.3%). Positioning the the knee in flexion and protecting the nerve via lateral rotators and frequent control of separators have been recommended during surgery [13].

In the long-term study of Aşık et al. on a series including 240 patients, the clinical outcomes of simple fractures were excellent or good in 71% of the patients; however, no significant relationship was determined between the type of the fracture and the clinical outcome [14]. In our study including 30 patients, 12 patients (40%) had simple and 18 (60%) had complex fractures. Although no relationship was determined between the fracture type and radiological or clinical well-being (p<0.05); simple and complex fractures showed very good or good recovery in 92% and 61% of the patients, respectively.

In the study of Matta on 259 patients, the quality of reduction was anatomically graded in 185 hips (71%). It was determined that the complex type of fracture affected the quality of reduction [3]. In the study of Aşık et al. on 240 patients, 168 patients (70%) had anatomical reduction, 48 (20%) had insufficient re-
In conclusion, we believe that a successful surgery of acetabular fractures is determined \[20\]. The fracture should be determined via a detailed pre-operative analysis and interpretation, writing, some of the main line, or all of the preparation and scientific review of the contents and approval of the final version of the article.

Animal and human rights statement
All procedures performed in this study were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards. No animal or human studies were carried out by the authors for this article.

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Conflict of interest
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