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Case Reports and Series

## Lisfranc Joint Ligament Complex Reconstruction: A Promising Solution for Missed, Delayed, or Chronic Lisfranc Injury Without Arthritis

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#### ABSTRACT

The current classifications of "Lisfranc injury" can be purely ligamentous (low-grade midfoot sprains) or involve the osseous and articular structures (high-grade Lisfranc fracture displacements). The first type is often difficult to detect. If these patients are not properly treated, long-term disability can result. The rate of missed or delayed diagnoses has ranged from 13% to 24%, primarily owing to the subtlety of the radiographic findings. This is relatively more common in cases of subtle ligamentous injury (19%). The aim of the present report was to provide a new technique for missed or delayed Lisfranc injury without degenerative local signs. The Lisfranc ligament complex reconstruction is performed with a gracilis tendon graft and is protected by temporary screw fixation. We performed this technique in 3 patients. All 3 patients obtained good results, have been able to resume their previous activities, and have stated they would undergo this type of procedure again. The minimum follow-up length was 2 years.

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The expression "Lisfranc injury" means the displacement of  $\geq 1$  of the metatarsal bones from the cuneiforms or cuboid bones (tarsal bones). According to current classifications, "Lisfranc injury" can be purely ligamentous (1) (i.e., low-grade midfoot sprains) or can involve the osseous and articular structures (2) (i.e., high-grade Lisfranc fracture displacements). The first type is often difficult to detect, and if these patients are not properly treated, long-term disability can result (3).

Lisfranc injuries are uncommon, constituting approximately 0.2% of all fractures. In the United States, the annual incidence has been reported to be 1 per 55,000 persons. However, this could be an underestimation (4,5). The rate of missed or delayed diagnoses has ranged from 13% to 24%, primarily owing to the subtlety of the radiographic findings (6). A missed or delayed diagnosis is relatively more common in the case of subtle ligamentous injury (19%) (2).

It has been generally accepted that patients with a diagnosis of a Lisfranc injury within 6 weeks of the causative trauma should undergo open reduction and fixation but those Lisfranc injuries

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diagnosed  $\geq$ 6 weeks after the event should be treated with tarsometatarsal arthrodesis (7,8).

The aim of our report was to provide a new technique for missed or delayed Lisfranc injury without degenerative local signs. The Lisfranc ligament complex reconstruction is performed with a gracilis tendon graft and is protected by temporary screw fixation (Figs. 1 and 2).

To date, we have performed this technique in 3 patients (Table 1). All 3 have obtained good results. They have been able to resume their previous activities and have stated they would undergo this type of procedure again. The minimum follow-up length was 2 years. We believe our technique could be a promising solution for missed, delayed, or chronic Lisfranc injury without arthritis.

#### **Patients and Methods**

From August 2013 to April 2014, we registered 3 prospective, consecutive patients from the outpatient department with a delayed Lisfranc lesion. The initial diagnosis at the causative trauma was "contusion foot" in 2 cases and "midfoot sprain" in the third (Table 1). The initial treatment was a cast with no weightbearing for 2 patients and a bandage for the third. All 3 patients were female, with a mean age of 33.3 (range 22 to 44) years. The affected side for all 3 patients was the right foot. The Lisfranc lesion was diagnosed 2, 3, and

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Fig. 1. Weightbearing anteroposterior radiographs of the first patient (23-year-old female) (A) before surgery, (B) 4 months after surgery, and (C) 1 month after hardware removal.

4.5 months after the trauma. The findings from weightbearing radiographs were definitive (anteroposterior and lateral views). According to the current classification of low-grade (purely ligamentous) Lisfranc injuries (1), 2 patients had stage III and 1 had stage II. No degenerative signs were present on the radiologic images; thus, we decided to try to prevent the use of tarsometatarsal arthrodesis, the treatment of choice for such cases.



**Fig. 2.** Weightbearing lateral radiographs of the first patient (*A*) before surgery, (*B*) 4 months after surgery, and (*C*) 1 month after hardware removal.

The initial idea for the technique we performed was developed with the first patient (22 years old). The results were good; thus, we decided to perform the same technique for the other 2 cases that emerged later.

#### Indications

Lisfranc joint ligament complex reconstruction is a procedure indicated for patients with missed or delayed Lisfranc injury without degenerative local signs. The ideal candidate for this technique is an active patient with a normal body mass index with the Lisfranc lesion diagnosed >6 weeks after the causative trauma and without degenerative signs found on the radiographs.

#### Surgical Technique

#### Patient Positioning and Anesthesia

The procedure was performed with the patient under general anesthesia and placed in the supine position. An uninflated pneumatic tourniquet was applied to the thigh.

#### Harvest of Gracilis Tendon Autograft

The gracilis tendon of the ipsilateral knee was removed using a tendon harvester inserted through a medial knee skin incision that was approximately 3 cm long. A portion of the harvested gracilis tendon approximately 10 cm long was made into an autograft and conformed into a usable shape for reconstruction of the Lisfranc ligament complex. The knee incision was closed in the usual manner.

#### Incision and Exposure

The leg was then raised for 4 minutes and the tourniquet inflated to induce ischemia. Two longitudinal incisions were made in the foot: 1 medially, over the medial cuneiform (C1) and first metatarsal (M1), and 1 dorsally between the second and third metatarsals (M2 and M3, respectively), with the proximal end of the incision at the level of the base of the bones (Fig. 3A).

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