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Acta Orthopaedica et Traumatologica Turcica

journal homepage: <https://www.elsevier.com/locate/aott>

Arthroscopic treatment of symptomatic calcific periarthritis on the medial side of the knee after posterior cruciate ligament reconstruction: Case report and literature review

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 2 July 2015

Received in revised form

19 August 2015

Accepted 27 September 2015

Available online xxx

Keywords:

Calcific periarthritis

Distal femur

Arthroscopy

Posterior cruciate ligament reconstruction

ABSTRACT

Calcific periarthritis in the distal femur is a rare condition. Forty two year old Asian male visited to the outpatient clinic of orthopedic department with acute excruciating knee pain. The arthroscopic posterior cruciate ligament (PCL) reconstruction was performed 20 years ago with the bonepatellar tendon-bone (BPTB) autograft combined with Trevira (polyethylene terephthalate) artificial ligament. Severe tenderness was noted incidentally over the medial epicondyle area of the distal femur which the cancellous screw was inserted for PCL reconstruction, without any preceding trauma history or medial joint line tenderness due to degenerative change. The poorly defined calcific deposition was found in plain radiograph. The arthroscopic debridement of the calcification and screw removal from the distal femur was performed due to resist to conservative treatment with analgesics. After operation, the symptoms were resolved completely. The arthroscopic debridement of calcific periarthritis should be considered in specific cases, such as refractory cases with conservative management during 4–6 weeks. We present the arthroscopic treatment of the symptomatic calcific periarthritis on distal femur after PCL reconstruction can be effective.

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Introduction

Calcific periarthritis is a benign condition characterized by deposition of calcium hydroxyapatite in the soft tissues around joints. It is often related with specific metabolic disorders such as end stage renal failure, diabetes mellitus, hypophosphatasia, chronic repetitive injury or microtrauma.^{1–3} Calcific periarthritis predominantly found to the shoulder,^{1,4} but has also been described throughout the body such as wrist, hip, thigh, knee, ankle and foot,⁵ characterized by severe pain, swelling and disability of the each part. However, calcific periarthritis of the distal femur is an unusual cause of knee pain. Generally, the conservative treatments including rest, non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, and analgesics are usually effective. Meanwhile, the surgical procedures including arthroscopic debridement also can be an effective

treatment in refractory to conservative treatment or severe cases for immediate pain relief and early return to normal condition.^{6,7}

We present an unusual case of calcific periarthritis on the distal femur just above the head of cancellous screw for the posterior cruciate ligament (PCL) reconstruction, which was treated by arthroscopy.

Case presentation

A 42-year-old male presented with a 5-day history of acute onset and nontraumatic knee pain to the outpatient orthopedic clinics. There were no previous medical histories, such as gout, diabetes, sepsis or relevant family history. Twenty years ago, the arthroscopic posterior cruciate ligament (PCL) reconstruction was performed with the bone-patellar tendon-bone (BPTB) autograft combined with Trevira (polyethylene terephthalate) artificial ligament. The graft was fixed with cancellous screw and staple on each proximal and distal end of tunnel. The outcomes of PCL reconstruction were successful in terms of clinical and functional results including knee pain, symptoms of instability before visiting the

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Peer review under responsibility of Turkish Association of Orthopaedics and Traumatology.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.aott.2017.03.017>1017-995X/© 2017 Turkish Association of Orthopaedics and Traumatology. Publishing services by Elsevier B.V. This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>).

outpatient clinic. The pain was progressively aggravation and resisted to conservative treatment despite of the administration of analgesics. The physical examination revealed a moderate knee effusion without heating or skin lesions except postoperative scar. The severe tenderness was found over the medial epicondyle area of the knee, which the cancellous screw for PCL reconstruction was inserted. However, there were no tenderness points on medial knee joint line. The ligamentous laxity could not be checked exactly and both passive and active ranges of movements were restricted from 0° to 110° due to pain.

Plain radiographs of the knee anteroposterior (AP) and merchant view showed a calcific deposition over the medial aspect of the medial femoral condyle (Fig. 1). Magnetic resonance images were limited due to metal artifact except degeneration and suspicious horizontal tear in medial meniscus, but no other specific findings were found. The laboratory examinations showed all normal values including C-reactive protein, erythrocyte sedimentation rate, alkaline phosphatase and uric acid.

Because the refractory pain and point tenderness just above the inserted screw were persisted after conservative treatment using analgesics, the metal irritation or calcific periartthritis on distal femur were supposed to induce the patient's symptoms. Accordingly, the arthroscopic removal of calcific deposition was decided.

The patient was placed in supine position after general anesthesia. During arthroscopic exam with full extension position, the arthroscopy was placed on the anterolateral portal to evaluate the knee, and the anteromedial portal was used to probe the medial compartment of the knee. With a synovial congestion, some whitish, toothpaste-like, but hard deposition was found just above the screw head after partial synovectomy (Fig. 2). The calcification was removed entirely and washed out using the shaver and punch. The intraoperative tissue samples were sent for histopathology.

Then, cancellous screw and staple on distal femur were removed by mini-open incision (Fig. 3).

The preoperative visual analogue scale (VAS) score was 8, and then significantly decreased to 1 after surgery. At final follow up at 2 years after surgery, the symptoms were free and all calcifications were completely removed with no recurrence. Histopathology revealed degenerative fibrocollagenous tissue with calcification consistent (Fig. 4).

Discussion

Calcific periartthritis is a rare, monoarticular, periarticular process of dystrophic mineral deposition, a distinct clinical type of calcium hydroxyapatite deposition disease.² Patients often present with acute pain related to involved joints, with no history of prior injury. The process is usually monoarticular, most of which were in the rotator cuff in shoulder, however can affect several joints, such as in the elbow, wrist, finger, hip, knee.⁴ Calcific periartthritis that occurs other than adjacent to the shoulder is uncommon, especially rare in knee joint (Table 1).

As a differential diagnosis, the Pellegrini-Stieda syndrome that defined the calcification of the origin of the MCL should be considered. There were controversies of the pathogenesis of Pellegrini–Stieda lesion, however, the history of trauma should be followed by the delayed presentation of the lesion approximately 3 weeks.⁸ But in this case, the patient has no history of trauma and acute onset of symptoms, therefore, the clinical manifestations of this patient are different from that of the Pellegrini–Stieda syndrome.

It is generally thought to be caused by a variety of contributory factors and medical conditions. Many factors, such as acute injury, repetitive microtrauma, and chemical-induced trauma may cause

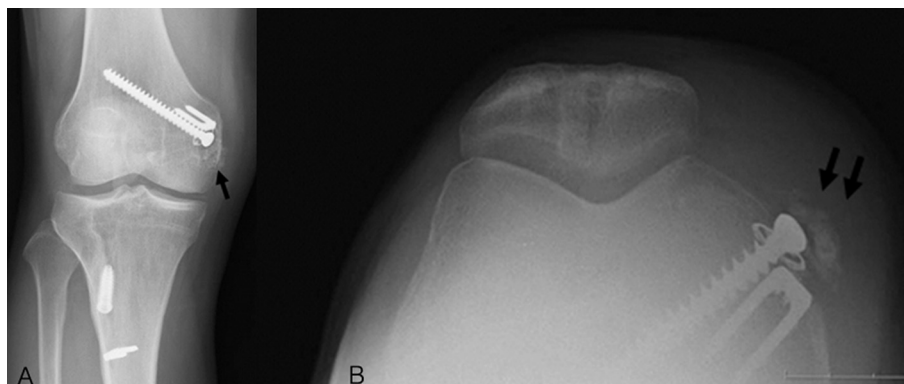


Fig. 1. Preoperative knee. (A) Anteroposterior and (B) Merchant radiographs. Calcifications (Black arrow) were deposited over the cancellous screw that was fixed on medial aspect of the medial femoral condyle.

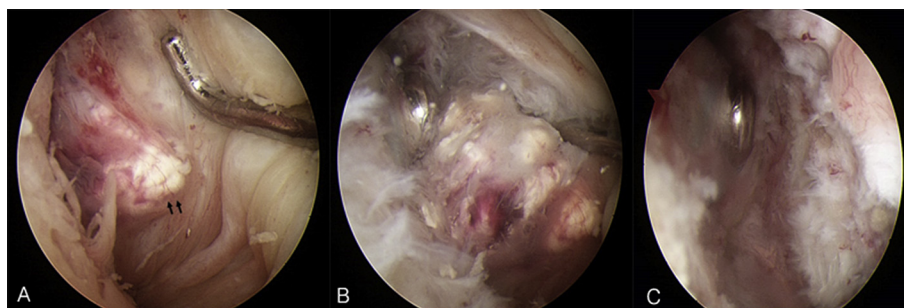


Fig. 2. Arthroscopic view. (A) Bulging of the calcific deposit (arrows) with synovial congestion around the distal femur medial compartment. (B) White and hard calcific depositions exuded from the excised synovial membrane. (C) After all calcific depositions were removed.

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