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Strategies in prevention and treatment of prosthetic joint infections

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CHAPTER

5

Hip and Knee Section, Treatment, Two-Stage Exchange: Proceedings of International Consensus on Orthopaedic Infections

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QUESTION 1:

What is the optimal timing for reimplantation of a 2-stage exchange arthroplasty of the hip and knee?

Recommendation:

The optimal timing for reimplantation of a 2-stage exchange arthroplasty of the hip or knee has not been established. Reimplantation may be performed when the treating medical team feels that the infection is under control.

Level of Evidence: Moderate

Delegate Vote: Agree: 93%, Disagree: 4%, Abstain: 3% (Super Majority, Strong Consensus)

Rationale:

There is no conclusive evidence for defining the optimal timing between resection arthroplasty and reimplantation in a 2-stage revision arthroplasty for periprosthetic joint infections (PJIs). Multiple studies have reported time to reimplantation ranging from a few weeks to several months or even years.¹⁻¹¹ Literature has used various definitions for PJI 2-stage treatment success or failure as well as different variables influencing the timing of reimplantation. Due to this heterogeneity, they have failed to answer this question. Success of treatment with a 2-stage arthroplasty varies between <70% and 100%, with no direct correlation to the spacer time interval.^{1,2,6,7,9,11}

Several studies have reported on time to reimplantation and its influence on success or failure. Haddad et al reported no increase in reinfection rates by reducing the interval to 3 weeks.⁵ Sabry et al found that an increased duration between resection and reimplantation was associated with higher rates of infection recurrence in a cohort of 314 infected TKAs treated with 2-stage exchange arthroplasty.⁷ Their median interval between stages was 103 days (range, 2-470 days). A study by Kubista et al also found that a longer time period between spacer insertion and reimplantation was associated with increased PJI recurrence.⁸ In contrast, Babis et al obtained a 100% success rate when using a long interval - mean 9 months (range, 8-12 months) in a group of patients with a high percentage of multi-resistant bacteria.⁹

One common belief is that a delayed second stage or reimplantation will result in higher rate of treatment success. However, this is not based on strong evidence and may lead to an unnecessary long inter-stage interval with its associated morbidity.

Aali-Rezaie et al, in a recent, large retrospective cohort study evaluating patients with 2-stage exchange arthroplasty, did not detect a clear association between time to reimplantation and treatment failure.¹⁰ Furthermore, they found that delaying the time to reimplantation did not significantly improve treatment success of 2-stage exchange arthroplasty. In addition, Vielgut et al found, in a study of 76 hip infections, that patients who had their reimplantation between 4 and 11 weeks had a significantly higher success rate when compared to less than 4 and greater than 11 weeks.⁶

When deciding on the optimal timing for reimplantation, most surgeons prefer to rely on a combination of clinical evaluations, such as a completely healed wound, no pain, and serologic tests trending downward after a period of antibiotic therapy.¹¹ Various studies recommend a complete work up with normalized laboratory and clinical variables to assure infection control before reimplantation.

QUESTION 2:

Is it safe to retain a stable cement mantle, for later use, in patients undergoing resection arthroplasty for periprosthetic joint infections (PJIs)?

Recommendation:

Meticulous debridement and removal of all foreign material, including cement, should be part of resection arthroplasty in the management of periprosthetic joint infections (PJIs). Limited data suggest that under strict conditions and following a meticulous surgical technique, a stable cement mantle in the femur may be left in place for later use in order to minimize damage to the femoral bone stock.

Level of Evidence: Limited

Delegate Vote: Agree: 63%, Disagree: 29%, Abstain: 8% (Super Majority, Weak Consensus)

Rationale:

Historically, resection arthroplasty for periprosthetic joint infections (PJIs) involved removal of all the foreign material including cement, as these materials can act as a nidus for the biofilm and persistence of infection.¹²⁻¹⁶ However, removal of the cement mantle increases operative time and causes increased morbidity through bone loss and fractures. The in-cement revision technique is a useful, well-described technique used

in aseptic conditions to avoid the tedious task of cement removal and therefore avoid complications associated with cement extraction.¹⁷⁻²¹ Retention of an intact cement mantle in cases of resection arthroplasty for PJI would be preferable to avoid the morbidity associated with its removal and would make subsequent reimplantation technically easier.

The concern for retaining cement in the setting of PJI has been supported by *in vitro* studies. Kendall et al examined microbial growth of staphylococcal species on the surface of antibiotic-loaded cement discs incubated in broth. While the broth itself was sterilized by the discs after 96 hours, growth was consistently seen on the surface of the cement discs themselves. The cement, therefore, seemed to be a habitable surface for continued growth of bacteria, despite elution of antibiotics.²² Mariconda et al demonstrated that fluid around antibiotic-loaded cement that is sonicated can yield positive cultures, even if aspiration fluid was culture-negative, indicating that biofilms can persist on antibiotic-loaded cement.²³ Tunney et al and Minelli et al showed that the biofilm could form even on antibiotic-loaded cement, depending on the inoculum and the type and dosing of the antibiotic agent.^{24,25} Although Griffin et al could not demonstrate biofilm formation in explanted spacers, Ma et al demonstrated that 30.7% of spacers had bacterial contamination at the time of the second stage.^{26,27} This laboratory data should give some cause for concern for the retention of cement in the setting of infection, even if loaded with antibiotics.

The clinical data on this topic are extremely limited. There are 2 case series that examine this specific issue, both involving a stable cement mantle in revision total hip arthroplasty for infection. Morley et al reviewed 15 total hips with 2-stage revisions for PJIs while retaining the original cement mantle, and reported infection-free outcomes in 14 of 15 patients.²⁸ The authors used very strict selection criteria for the patient cohort including a stable cement mantle, prior use of antibiotic loaded cement, and meticulous burring of the cement mantle to remove the biofilm and liberate antibiotics as vital to the success of this technique. In a similar study, however, Leijtens et al reported success in only two of 10 patients undergoing 2-stage revision total hip arthroplasty for infection at an average of 26 months.²⁹ It should be noted that this study did not mention whether the existing cement mantle contained antibiotics or not.

There is only one level IV study showing good results with a retained stable cement mantle for later use in resection arthroplasty in the treatment of PJIs. Although this technique presents theoretical advantages, there is a lack of robust evidence in the

literature to support its routine use. Direction for further research might include the use of chemical debridement agents, such as dilute povidone-iodine, chlorhexidine irrigation, and/or acetic acid preparations, which some evidence suggests might help eradicating microbes and biofilms in some settings.³⁰ The role of chemical debridement agents in eliminating sessile bacteria and biofilms on the surface of retained cement has yet to be explored. With further research, the answer to this question might become known.

QUESTION 3:

Should surgeons make an effort to remove cement that has extruded into the pelvis or at difficult anatomical positions in patients with periprosthetic joint infections (PJIs)?

Recommendation:

The orthopaedic surgeon should carefully consider whether the potential benefits of cement extraction from the pelvis or difficult anatomical positions outweigh the potential risks of persistence of infection.

Level of Evidence: Consensus

Delegate Vote: Agree: 85%, Disagree: 9%, Abstain: 6% (Super Majority, Strong Consensus)

Rationale:

Extrusion of cement during primary arthroplasty is reported to occur in 25% of patients.³¹ Bacteria can form a biofilm on foreign bodies in patients with prosthetic joint infections.³² Therefore, in patients with periprosthetic joint infections (PJIs), who are undergoing resection arthroplasty, it is recommended that the prosthesis and all foreign material including bone cement be removed and thorough debridement performed. Whether or not cement in the pelvis or in difficult anatomic positions contributes to the risk of persistent infection after revision arthroplasty has not been studied.

When cement is extruded into the pelvis or difficult anatomic positions during primary arthroplasty, there is a risk of neurological (obturator nerve palsy, femoral or sciatic nerve involvement), urological (such as a foreign body in the bladder wall), or vascular (with compression of the external iliac vein) complications.³³⁻³⁸ During extraction of

extruded cement, the risk of these complications may be even greater due to the manipulation needed for extraction.

It is common wisdom and belief among surgeons that foreign material in an infected joint may harbor the biofilm formed by the infecting organism. Leaving behind foreign material during resection arthroplasty and debridement, thus, runs the theoretical risk of allowing for the biofilm and infection to persist and could therefore potentially jeopardize the success of surgical debridement. The latter dogma has actually never been proven in a conclusive study. It is also known that removal of foreign material, such as cement, from anatomically sensitive and/or inaccessible areas may require a wider surgical approach (such as laparotomy for extruded cement into the pelvis) or manipulation of structures such as organs (e.g., bladder, bowel), vessels (e.g., vena cava or major veins), or nerves (e.g., sciatic or plexus). The manipulation of these structures may threaten the life of the patient and/or lead to catastrophic complications. Thus, we believe surgeons should exercise their wisdom when dealing with patients with PJIs and extruded cement or other foreign materials in anatomically sensitive and/or inaccessible areas.

QUESTION 4:

Does the use of non-antibiotic impregnated allograft for bone defects during reimplantation increase the risk of recurrence of SSIs/PJIs?

Recommendation:

There is no evidence to demonstrate that using non-antibiotic impregnated allograft for management of bone defects during reimplantation (following PJIs) increases the risk of recurrence of SSIs/PJIs.

Level of Evidence: Limited

Delegate Vote: Agree: 88%, Disagree: 9%, Abstain: 3% (Super Majority, Strong Consensus)

Rationale:

Systematic reviews were undertaken using PubMed, Cochrane Library, SCOPUS, and Google Scholars databases and relevant papers were reviewed. During review, it became evident that there is a dearth of information directly assessing treatment of periprosthetic joint infections (PJIs) when a non-antibiotic impregnated allograft was

used. Overall, 51 articles were reviewed in full. The evidence is summarized in the following paragraphs.

Following the increased popularity of the use of allograft bone in tumor surgery in 1970s, infection has become a major concern.³⁹ The early reports of infection rates range from 13.2% by Mankin et al to 11.7% by Lord et al and were followed by 7.9% in a comprehensive report by Mankin et al in 2005.⁴⁰⁻⁴² All authors believed that higher rates of infection could be attributed to the disease nature, extent, duration, and complexity of the procedures and not related to the allograft itself.⁴⁰⁻⁴²

Tomford et al in a retrospective study reviewed 324 patients who received allografts and showed a negligible clinical incidence of infection.⁴³ The incidence related to the use of large allografts was approximately 5% in bone tumor and 4% in revision of a hip arthroplasty. These rates of infection were not substantially different from those that have been reported in similar series in which sterilized prosthetic devices were used.⁴⁴ One of the early reports of allografts in revision total hip arthroplasty (THA) was published by Berry et al.⁴⁴ They used bone allografts in 18 patients during 2-stage revision of septic THA failures. At a mean of 4.2 years after reimplantation, only 2 patients had a recurrence of the infection (11%).

Several retrospective cohort studies have evaluated the use of allograft bone during total hip reimplantation surgery, the second stage of planned 2-stage exchange arthroplasty for infection. The majority of these studies have demonstrated recurrent infection rates of 0 to 9% in cohorts consisting of 11-27 patients with midterm to long-term follow-up.^{5,44-49} Two studies reported less favourable reinfection rates of 11% (18 patients, mean 4.2 year follow-up) and 14% (57 patients, mean 9 year follow-up).^{50,51}

Traore et al reported a higher rate of 20% for reinfection at mean 3 years.⁵⁰ Loty et al reported a cohort of 90 cases with 8 (9%) reinfections over an unknown follow-up period in 1-stage hip revision for infection.⁵¹ Lange et al performed a systematic review on using bulk allograft for second-stage reimplantation of hip arthroplasty and revealed a reinfection rate of four of 43 (9.3%) at an average follow-up of 6 years.⁵² This was comparable to the reinfection rate reported for 2-stage revision without using allograft. Alexeeff et al also had no recurrence of infection in 11 septic failures of THA that underwent 2-stage revision THA using massive structural allografts and were followed for an average of 47.8 months.⁴⁸

Tsahakis et al reported on 15 cases that used allograft for revision knee surgery, and of the three infected knees in their case series, there was no recurrence of infection.⁵³ Wilde et al performed a retrospective review of 16 revisions TKAs with allograft.⁵⁴ There were two infected cases and neither of these experienced reinfection. Stockley et al reviewed 32 deep-frozen irradiated allografts used for the reconstruction of bone defects in 20 knees with an average follow-up of 4.2 years.⁵⁵ Three knees developed infection (9.3%), and one of these was a revision for infection. However, they did not believe that the allograft was the source of sepsis.

Further reports by Harris et al (14 patients including 2 infected cases), Mow et al (15 structural allografts), and Engh et al (35 allografts), examined revision TKA cases and found no cases of reinfection.⁵⁶⁻⁵⁸ Ghazavi et al reported 3 infections (7%) using bulk allograft in 38 patients including 3 infections that underwent revision. Two of the 3 cases who had previous infections experienced reinfection.⁵⁹ In a report by Clatworthy et al on 52 cases, there were 6 infections, all of which underwent revision TKA with a bulk allograft. One of the 6 patients who had a previous infection developed recurrence of infection.⁶⁰

English et al reported their results of using impaction allografting in the second-stage reimplantation of 53 infected hip arthroplasties.⁶¹ After a mean follow-up of 53 months, 4 patients had recurrence of infection (7.5%). In reports by Dennis et al (32 allografts) and Garino et al (8 cases of impaction allografts), there were no infections at final follow-up.^{62,63}

Hockman et al reviewed 65 consecutive revision TKAs including 12 infections at a minimum 5-year follow-up.⁶⁴ Three of the 12 (25%) previously infected cases developed infections. They concluded that knees originally revised for infection were more likely to fail. Bush et al reviewed options for reconstructing massive bone loss and recommended against using allograft in some situations including chronic infections.⁶⁵ Backstein et al reported 68 cases of massive allografts for revision TKA, and 11 of these were septic revisions.⁶⁶ They found 4 infections (6.5%). The authors did not include how many of them had surgery for septic revisions. They believed that because of the large size of the used allograft bone and the number of previous surgeries the patients had, the infection rate was modest.

Lotke et al reported on 48 cases including one infection that received impaction allografting in revision TKA.⁶⁷ At an average follow-up of 3.8 years, they had 2 infections

(5%). Bezwada et al reviewed 11 knees in 10 patients who underwent revision with distal femoral allografts and stemmed components.⁶⁸ After a mean follow-up of 42 months, they had no infections. They recommended against the use of plate fixation to decrease extensive soft tissue dissection and the risk of infection.

Eng et al reported no cases of reinfection in 49 revision knees with severe tibial bone defects, 5 of which were revisions for infection.⁶⁹ Rudelli et al reported on 32 loose and infected total hip arthroplasties that underwent revision with a bone graft in a 1-stage procedure.⁷⁰ After a mean follow-up of 103 months, infection recurred in 2 (6.2%) cases.

Burnett et al reported on 28 knees that underwent revision TKA with an allograft at a follow-up of 48 months.⁷¹ Only 1 patient (3.5%), who received cancellous graft for a contained defect, developed an infection. They did not mention if this was an infected revision. Lyall et al investigated 15 revision TKA patients, including 3 revisions for infections with severe tibial bone loss.⁷² These patients were followed for a mean of 5.4 years, and they found 1 (6%) recurrence of infection at 3.5 years.

Bauman et al retrospectively reviewed 74 patients (79 knees) who had revision TKAs with structural allografts.⁷³ Of this cohort, 65 patients (70 knees) were followed for a minimum of 5 years or until revision or death. Five of 16 failures were secondary to infection (7.1%). Two of these patients had a history of infection and 2 had local wound problems at the time of revision surgery requiring muscle flap or skin grafting. The authors concluded that the large bulk allografts were more likely to fail secondary to infection or non-union.

In an overview on management of bone loss in revision TKR, Lombardi et al did not mention infection as a disadvantage (i.e., late resorption, fracture, non-union, or risk of disease transmission) of using an allograft.⁷⁴ Lee et al retrospectively reviewed 27 patients who underwent 2-stage revision arthroplasty using structural allografts to treat massive bone defects in infected hip arthroplasty.⁴⁹ After a mean follow-up of 8.2 years, only 1 patient (3.7%) experienced a reinfection.

Richards et al reported on a cohort of 24 patients reconstructed with femoral head allografts at the time of revision TKA and they compared them to 48 cases without allograft. All reported quality of life scores were higher in the allograft group.⁷⁵ They did not observe any failures. Wang et al reported 28 patients with femoral head allografts for revision TKA at a mean follow-up of 76 months.⁷⁶ They had no complications and no

infections. Vasso et al reviewed multiple papers on options for management of bone loss in revision TKA.⁷⁷ They concluded that modular metal and tantalum augmentation may considerably shorten operative times with a potential decrease in the incidence of complications including infection associated with the use of allografts. In a review of 27 patients who had undergone revision TKA using a fresh frozen femoral head allograft and followed for 107 months, there was 1 (3.7%) recurrence of infection.⁷⁸

Recently, Beckmann et al performed a systematic review on the treatment of revision TKA with bony structural allografts (overall including 476 cases) and porous metal cones (overall including 223 cases).⁷⁹ They compared the failure rates using a regression model with adjustment for discrepancies in follow-up time and number of grafts used (femoral, tibial, or both). They did not separate septic revisions from aseptic revisions, but there was little difference in the infection rates between allograft and porous metal groups.

Mancuso et al also reviewed the available English literature since 2007 on options for reconstruction of bone defects in revision TKA.⁸⁰ Infection was reported in eight of 271 (3%) allografts, 43 of 662 (6%) metal cones, and 27 of 901 (3%) sleeves, indicating that the use of allografts did not lead to a higher rate of infection than metal cones or sleeves.

Sandiford et al compared femoral head structural allografts and trabecular metal cones for the management of severe bone defects during revision TKA.⁸¹ They evaluated 30 allografts and 15 metal cones at a mean follow-up of 9 years and found no differences in pain, function, or repeat revision. The reason for revision was infection in 2 patients. They observed no reinfection in either group, although 1 patient in the allograft group developed a periprosthetic fracture and developed an infection after treatment of this fracture.

Infection is the major cause of failure in revision TKA (44.1%) [69] and the risk is even higher in patients with septic revisions.^{69,82} However, given the absence of any prospective controlled studies, the paucity of comparative studies with control groups, and the conflicting data in case series, we could not reach any conclusion regarding the effect of using an allograft on the rate of infection in revision arthroplasty for septic failures.

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