

**EVALUATION OF A.T.L.A.S
INSTRUMENTATION
FOR THORACOLUMBAR INSTABILITY**

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE M.D DEGREE IN
ORTHOPEDIC SURGERY

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CONTENTS

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	IV
LIST OF TABLES.....	V
LIST OF FIGURES.....	VI
INTRODUCTION.....	1
RELEVANT SURGICAL ANATOMY.....	2
GENERAL VERTEBRAL FEATURES	2
MORPHOLOGY OF THE VERTEBRAL BODY.....	3
MORPHOLOGY OF THE VERTEBRAL ENDPLATES	3
THORACOLUMBAR JUNCTION	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
THE LIGAMENTS	6
THORACIC AND LUMBAR SAGITTAL CONTOURS.....	6
RELATION OF THE NEURAL ELEMENTS TO THE SURROUNDING OSTEOLIGAMENTOUS STRUCTURES:.....	7
BIOMECHANICS.....	9
THE FUNCTIONAL SPINAL UNIT.....	10
SPINAL KINEMATICS	11
MECHANICAL FUNCTIONAL ANATOMY OF THE SPINE.....	12
(I) Mechanical function of the vertebral body	12
(II) Mechanical function of the facet joints.....	12
(III) Mechanical function of spinal ligaments	12
MECHANICAL FUNCTION OF INTERVERTEBRAL DISC	14
INSTANTANEOUS AXIS OF ROTATION	16
EFFECT OF THE THREE COLUMNS OF THE SPINE ON THE INSTANTANEOUS AXIS OF ROTATION IN FLEXION AND EXTENSION	17
MODES OF FAILURE UNDER COMPRESSIVE LOADING:.....	18
RATIONAL OF SPINAL FIXATION	20
POSTERIOR INSTRUMENTATION	20
ANTERIOR INSTRUMENTATION.....	21
MODERN ANTERIOR SPINAL SYSTEMS:.....	22
TECHNICAL DATA	22
AO Anterior Thoracolumbar Locking Plate	23
Z Plate.....	24
The Contoured Anterior Spinal Plate System (CASP)	25
TSRH (Texas Scottish Rite Hospital) System.....	26
Comparative Studies:.....	26
A.T.L.A.S (anatomic thoracolumbar anterior system).	28
THORACOLUMBAR FRACTURE	36
PATIENT EVALUATION.....	37

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CLASSIFICATION OF INJURY	38
<i>Type A-lesions</i>	42
<i>Type B-lesions</i>	44
<i>Type C-Lesion</i>	44
<i>Incidence of neurological deficit in 1,212 patients (12b)</i>	45
INDICATIONS OF ANTERIOR APPROACH	48
<i>Contraindications</i>	50
<i>Timing</i>	50
<i>Reconstruction</i>	52
<i>Biomechanics of Anterior Reconstruction</i>	53
SPINAL INFECTION.....	56
NON SPECIFIC SPINAL INFECTION	56
SPECIFIC SPINAL INFECTION	56
<i>Brucellosis and fungal infection</i>	58
SPONDYLOLISTHESIS	59
AETIOLOGY	59
CLINICAL PRESENTATION OF SPONDYLOLISTHESIS	59
<i>Back pain:</i>	61
<i>Leg pain:</i>	61
<i>Stiffness:</i>	61
<i>Deformity:</i>	61
<i>Gait:</i>	62
<i>Neurologic Manifestation:</i>	62
RADIOLOGICAL DIAGNOSIS OF SPONDYLOLISTHESIS:.....	62
<i>Plain X-ray</i>	62
<i>Computed tomography of the lumbar spine:</i>	65
<i>Magnetic Resonance Imaging of the Spine</i>	65
<i>Vertebral end plate (Modic) changes on lumbar spine MRI</i>	66
TREATMENT OF SPONDYLOLISTHESIS	67
NON OPERATIVE TREATMENT:	67
<i>Physical Therapy:</i>	67
<i>Medications:</i>	68
<i>Orthosis:</i>	68
<i>Others:</i>	69
OPERATIVE TREATMENT:.....	69
<i>Indications:</i>	69
<i>Goals of surgery:</i>	69
<i>Surgical Modalities:</i>	70
<i>Anterior Lumbar Interbody Fusion (ALIF)</i>	70
COMPLICATIONS OF ANTERIOR SPINE SURGERY.....	72
POSTOPERATIVE NEURAL INJURY	72
MALUNION.....	73
MATERIAL AND METHODS.....	75
MATERIAL.....	75
METHODS	85

TABLE OF CONTENTS

RESULTS.....	97
<i>Graft taken</i>	<i>99</i>
<i>Back Pain</i>	<i>99</i>
<i>Leg pain and Neurogenic Claudication in spondylololsthesis cases.....</i>	<i>100</i>
<i>Neurological Improvement:.....</i>	<i>100</i>
<i>Complications:</i>	<i>101</i>
<i>Intraoperative Complications:</i>	<i>101</i>
<i>Device complication:.....</i>	<i>101</i>
<i>Postoperative Complication:</i>	<i>101</i>
<i>a-Superficial Wound Infection</i>	<i>101</i>
<i>b-Incisional hernia:</i>	<i>101</i>
<i>c-Paraesthesia distal to the wound incision:</i>	<i>101</i>
<i>d-Pain Related to the Graft Site:.....</i>	<i>101</i>
CASES PRESENTATION	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
CASE I	102
CASE II	107
CASE III	110
CASE IV	113
DISCUSSION	116
CONCLUSIONS.....	121
REFERENCES.....	124
ARABIC SUMMARY.....	137

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

A.T.L.A.S	Anatomic ThoracoLumbar Anterior System
ALIF	Anterior Lumbar Interbody Fusion
ALL	Anterior longitudinal ligament
AP	Antero-posterior
ASF	Anterior spinal fusion
CASP	Contoured Anterior Spinal Plate System
cm.	Centimeter
CT	Computed tomography
ECG	Electrocardiogram
I.C.U.	Intensive care unit
i.e.	in other words
I.V.	Intravenous
IAR	instaneous axis of rotation
L.	Lumbar
Lat.	Lateral
mls	Milliliters
MRI	Magnetic resonance imaging
N	Newton
PA	postero-anterior
PLIF	posterior lumbar interbody fusion
PLL	Posterior longitudinal ligament
PMMA	polymethylmethacrylate block
Pt.	Patient
Pts.	Patients
SR	Smooth Rod
SSEP	Somatosensory evoked potential
T.	Thoracic
TSRH	Texas Scottish Rite Hospital
VB	Vertebral body
VSP	variable screw placement
Ys	Years

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Typical failure properties of the lumbar spinal ligaments and estimated maximum strains. Motion causing maximum strains in vivo given alongside value.....	16
Table 2. Progression of severity of thoracolumbar fractures	42
Table 3 Classification of thoracolumbar fracturesClassification of thoracolumbar fractures	47
Table 4. Summary of relative indications for the anterior approach[20]	49
Table 5. Classification of Wiltse Newman Macnab (1976).....	59
Table 6. Classification of Marchetti Bartolozzi[106]	60
Table 7. MRI grading of pars interarticularis[116]	66
Table 8. Active versus passive physical therapy protocols[120]	68
Table 9. General clinical outcome	98
Table 10. Overall results	98
Table 11. Grading of low back pain.....	99
Table 12. Postoperative grading of low back pain.....	100
Table 13. Grading of neurogenic claudication.....	100
Table 14. Clinical results of anterior decompression, fusion and stabilization using A.T.L.A.S and Kaneda devices.....	118
Table 15. comparison of A.T.L.A.S and Kaneda complication	120

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Lumbar spine lateral view [5].....	2
Figure 2. Lumbar vertebra, superior view. (2).....	3
Figure 3. VB diameter versus pinal level	4
Figure 4. VB height versus spinal level	4
Figure 5. Vertebral compression strength versus spinal level.....	4
Figure 6. Diagram representing a lumbar vertebra showing the maximum diameters of one of its endplates. [6]	5
Figure 7. Average contours of the inferior endplate of the L4 & L5 vertebra from male and female subjects. [10]	5
Figure 8. Ligaments of the lumbar spine [2].....	6
Figure 9. The conus medullaris is a section of the sacral roots [14]	8
Figure 10. The motion segments. [18]	10
Figure 11. The Lever system of motion segment[18]	11
Figure 12. ligaments of the spine excluding the upper cervical region.....	13
Figure 13. Illustrations of the anterior, middle, and posterior columns	15
Figure 14. Kaneda SR device[37]	22
Figure 15. University Plate [30].....	23
Figure 16. AO Anterior Thoracolumbar Locking Plate[29]	24
Figure 17. Z Plate[3]	25
Figure 18. A.T.L.A.S costruct.....	28
Figure 19 vertebral plate inferior view	29
Figure 20 vertabral plate side view	29
Figure 21 vertebral plate back view	30
Figure 22. vertebral screw.....	31
Figure 23. Essential characteristics of the three injury types	41
Figure 24. Reverse cortical sign of the posterior wall fragment (asterisk) with cortex oriented towards the vertebral body (arrow).....	43
Figure 25. Rotation-shear injury: Holdsworth slice fracture	45
Figure 26. Algorithm of AO spine classification of thoracic and lumbar spine injury	46
Figure 27. Diagram of oblique radiograph of lumbosacral junction,.....	63
Figure 28. Grades of spondylolisthesis[110]	64
Figure 29. The three main lumbar CT levels per segment [114]	65
Figure 30. Age distribution	76
Figure 31.Pathological distribution of the cases.	76
Figure 32.Gender distrebution.	77
Figure 33.Age distribution in trauma cases.	78
Figure 34. Female age distribution in trauma cases.....	78
Figure 35.Vertebraal levels in trauma.....	79
Figure 36.Neurological affection.	80
Figure 37. Preop.kyphosis angles.	80

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 38.Column affection.	81
Figure 39.Percentage of canal compromise.	81
Figure 40.Number of tumor cases in the study.	82
Figure 41.Geneder in tumor cases.....	82
Figure 42.Vertebra level in tumor cases.	83
Figure 43. Operative positioning.	86
Figure 44. The skin incision is centered opposite the required level	87
Figure 45. Muscle cutting in layers.....	88
Figure 46.Retroperitoneal dissection.	88
Figure 47.Psoas retraction.....	89
Figure 48.Exposure of the spine	90
Figure 49.Assemly of the A.T.L.A.S outside.....	91
Figure 50.Handles in place.	92
Figure 51.Demo of placing the implant.	92
Figure 52.Intraoperative placement of the implant.	93
Figure 53. Mesh filled with graft in position after implant fixation.	94
Figure 54. Placing the screws.	94
Figure 55.In vitero screw direction.	95
Figure 56.Closure of the wound in layers.	96
Figure 57. Overall results.....	99
Figure 58. X Ray lateral view shows fracture L1	102
Figure 59. MRI shows marked canal compromise	103
Figure 60. A-P view postoperatively.	104
Figure 61. X- ray post-operative lateral view	105
Figure (62). 4 weeks post-operative with complete neurological recovery.	106
Figure 63. lateral view shows lateral slippage with metal failure.....	107
Figure 64. X Ray shows post operative fixation with ATLAS system	108
Figure 65. X-rays of the last follow up showing excellent fusion.	109
Figure 66. MRI shows the infection in L2,L3.....	110
Figure 67. X Rays post operative shows the cement spacer with onlay graft.....	111
Figure 68. X-ray AP for L1 lesion	113
Figure 69. MRI shows the tumor compromising the canal.....	114
Figure 70. post- operative Lat. View	115
Figure 71. Post-operative AP view	115

INTRODUCTION

Anterior fixation techniques through the 1950s continued to rely on the use of rigid implants of bone rather than metallic implants. The development of anterior fixation devices generally has lagged behind that of posterior instrumentation. Dwyer and colleagues (1969) developed the first commonly used device for anterior fixation. This was a flexible device and was used for correction of spinal deformity only.[1] Zielke and coworkers (1978) modified the Dwyer technique to include a thin threaded rod rather than a flexible cable. Their design is semi rigid and has greater applicability to severe spinal deformities and injuries. Humphreys and coworkers (1971) reported on the use of an anterior plate for either one-level or two-level anterior spine fusions. Werlinich (1974) reported on the use of an anterior staple for single-level fusions. Kostuik (1983) reported on the development of an anterior device using Harrington distraction rods and modified Dwyer screws. He cautioned that the device did not provide good control of rotation and lateral bending and recommended the use of a supplementary external orthosis. Dunn (1984) described the evolution of an anterior fixation system from a semi rigid to rigid classification. This device subsequently was reported instances of aortic erosion with its use. Kaneda and colleagues (1984) described an anterior device similar to that of Dunn with two solid threaded rods placed laterally over the vertebrae. This device was further modified to include a cross-link to provide enhanced torsional stability. To date, there have been no reported instances of aortic erosion with this device[2].

There are many systems for anterior use being developed and tried on a clinical basis. They generally rely on segmental fixation and are either rigid or semi rigid [3].

ATLAS system is invented in Egypt and manufactured abroad. After biomechanical studies and clinical trials it is proved to be very efficient in restoring stability and balancing through the anterior approach.

RELEVANT SURGICAL ANATOMY

General Vertebral Features

A vertebra essentially has a ventral body and a dorsal vertebral (neural) arch, extended by lever-like processes, together enclosing a vertebral foramen, occupied by the spinal cord, meninges and their vessels (Fig. 1) [4, 5].

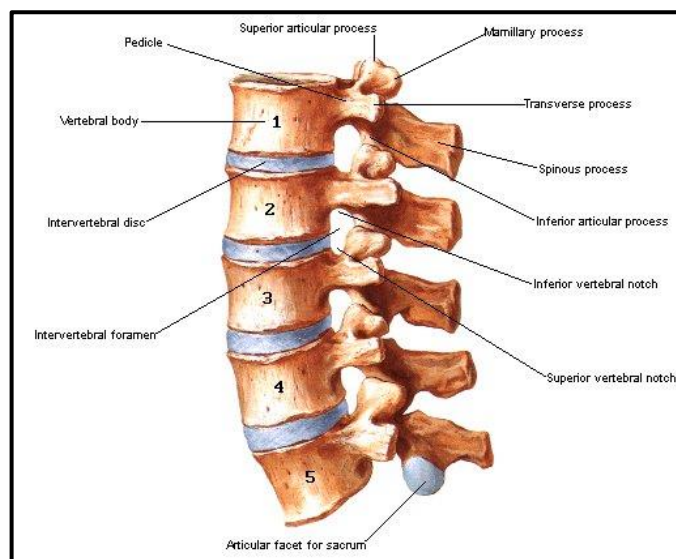


Figure 1. Lumbar spine lateral view [5]

Opposed surfaces of adjacent bodies are bound together by intervertebral discs of fibrocartilage. The complete column of bodies and discs forms a strong but flexible central axis of the body supporting the full weight of head and trunk. It also transmits even greater forces due to muscles attached to it. The vertebral foramina form a canal for the spinal cord. Between adjoining neural arches, near their junctions with vertebral bodies, intervertebral foramina transmit mixed spinal nerves, smaller recurrent nerves blood and lymphatic vessels. The vertebral arch has on each side a vertically narrow ventral part, the pedicle, and dorsally a broader lamina. Projecting from their junctions is paired transverse, superior and inferior articular processes; dorsally is a median spinous process (Fig. 2) [6].

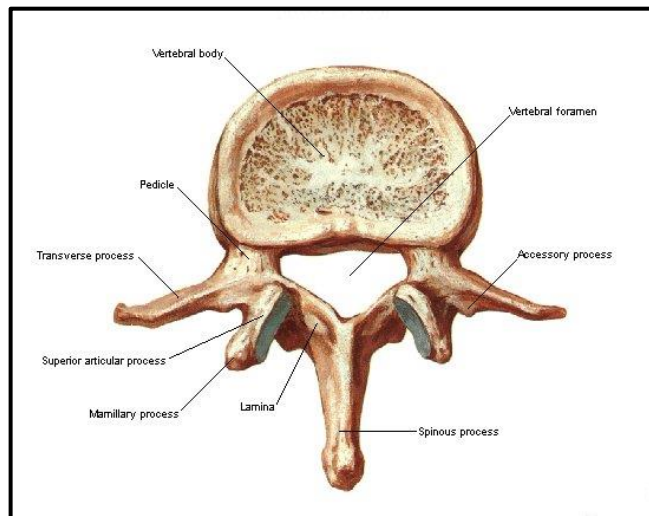


Figure 2. Lumbar vertebra, superior view. (2)

Morphology Of The Vertebral Body

Both the width and the height of the vertebral bodies increase as one descends in a cephalic to caudal direction (Fig. 3). The vertebral body height also increases in a cephalic to caudal direction (Fig. 4) [7].

The progressive increase in size of the vertebral bodies as one descends caudally, correlates with strength or stress-resisting ability. The decreased incidence of spine fractures observed in the lower lumbar spine is related, at least in part, to the increased strength of the vertebrae in this region. Fig.(5) [7].

Morphology Of The Vertebral Endplates

Accurate knowledge of the bony anatomy of the spine is necessary for optimal placement of the intersegmental grafts to stabilize the segment. Moreover, specific information describing the geometry of the vertebral body endplates is necessary for the development of spinal implants and surgical instruments [8].

Hall et. al; , analyzed the dimensions and shapes of the vertebral body endplates of inferior L4, inferior and superior L5, and superior S1. The endplates resembled a cardioid at the inferior L4 level and became more elliptical toward the superior S1 level. Fig.(7) [8].

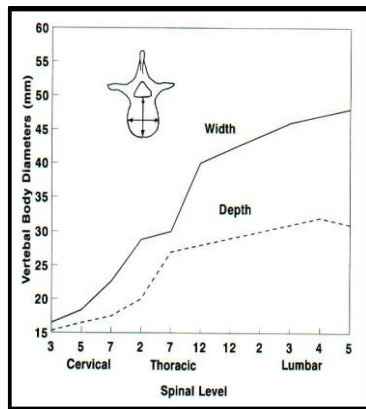


Figure 3. VB diameter versus spinal level

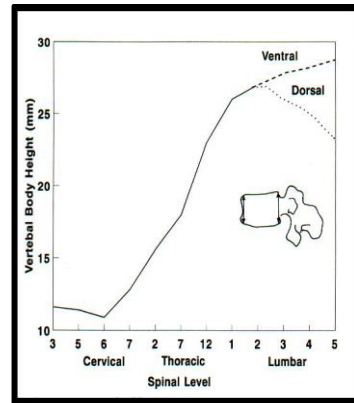


Figure 4. VB height versus spinal level

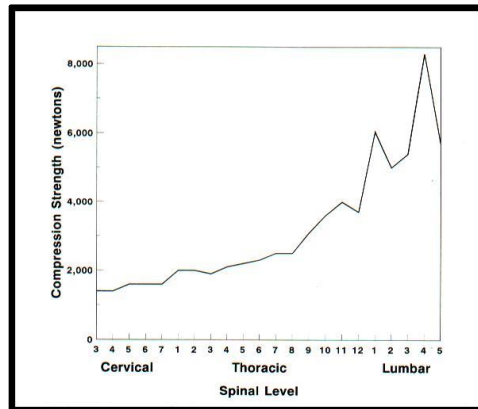
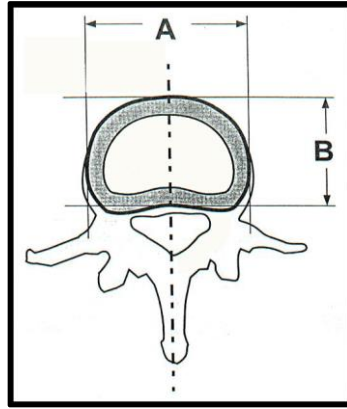


Figure 5. Vertebral compression strength versus spinal level

The sagittal diameter of the endplate was defined as the anteroposterior width in the midsagittal plane, and the transverse diameter was defined as the maximum width of the endplate perpendicular to this line[9].

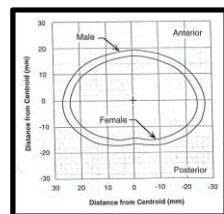


(A) Transverse (B) Sagittal

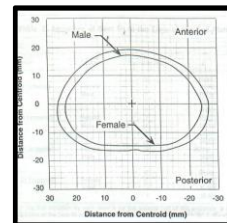
Figure 6. Diagram representing a lumbar vertebra showing the maximum diameters of one of its endplates. [6]

The average dimensions of the male endplates were 35.8 mm (sagittal) and 53.7 mm (maximum transverse). The female endplates were an average of 10% smaller (31.9 mm, 48.1 mm, respectively).Fig.(6) [10].

The average shapes of male and female endplates at each level appear as follow (Fig. 7)



L4



L5

Figure 7. Average contours of the inferior endplate of the L4 & L5 vertebra from male and female subjects. [10]

Thoracolumbar Junction

The anatomic transition into the lumbar spine begins in the lower thoracic region. It is typified by the alteration in facet orientation to the sagittal plane alignment, with a concomitant decrease in rotational freedom and increase in sagittal plane motion. Changes in the vertebral morphology include increasing anterior vertebral height and larger lumbar discs, resulting in lordosis[4].

The Ligaments

A variety of well-studied spinal ligaments provide varying degrees of support for the spine. These include the interspinous ligament, the ligamentum flavum, the anterior and posterior longitudinal ligaments, and the capsular ligaments[11](2).

The anterior longitudinal ligament (ALL) increases in tensile strength on approaching the thoracolumbar junction. Together with the intervertebral disc, the ALL provides the Thoracic considerable stability to rotational and transitional forces[12]. The annulus fibrosus is firmly attached to both anterior and posterior longitudinal ligaments. Superiorly and inferiorly, fibers attach to the bony endplates peripherally by means of Shapley's fibers [13].Fig.(8)

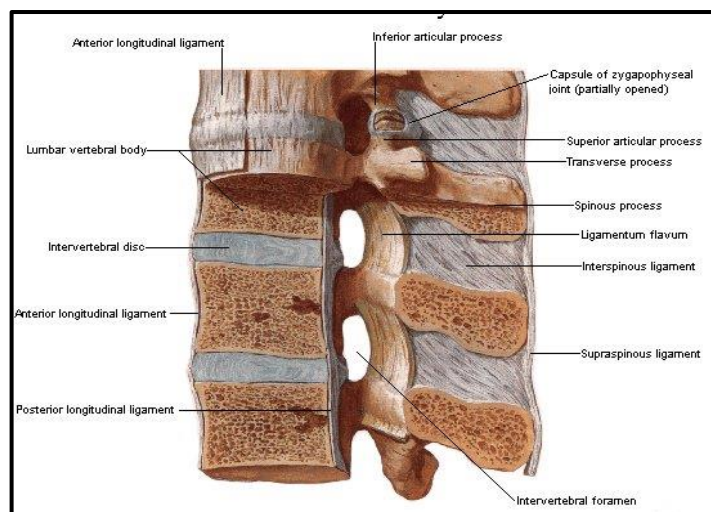


Figure 8. Ligaments of the lumbar spine [2]

Thoracic And Lumbar Sagittal Contours.

Normal thoracic kyphosis measures $+15^{\circ}$ to $+45^{\circ}$, whereas the average lordosis in the lumbosacral spine is -50° , the thoracolumbar junction(D11-L1) is straight (0°).The average kyphosis at the lower thoracic region is $+5^{\circ}$ while the average lordosis between D12 and L3 is -16° [14].