

Classification and Management of Odontoid Fractures

An Essay

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List of Contents

<i>Title</i>	<i>Page</i>
Introduction	1
Aim of the Work	3
Anatomy of the craniocervical junction	4
Biomechanical movements of the craniocervical junction	52
Clinical presentation and diagnosis	65
Classification of the odontoid fractures	72
Management of odontoid fractures	78
Prevention	112
Summary	133
References	136
Arabic summary	—

List of Figures

Fig. No.	Title	Page No.
1	Typical cervical vertebra cranial view.	6
2	Typical cervical vertebra lateral view.	6
3	Lower cervical vertebra, showing joints of Luschka and their relation to disc, intervertebral foramen, and facets.	7
4	Borders of the intervertebral foramen.	7
5	The atlas. A: Cranial view. B: Caudal view.	12
6	The atlas. A: Cranial view. B: Anterior view.	14
7	Median section at craniocervical junction, revealing atlantooccipital and atlantoaxial ligaments and membranes.	18
8	Axial view of cervicocranium from above, demonstrating the relations among the transverse (TR), alar (AR), and atlantodental (AD) ligaments.	19
9	Posterior view of the ligaments of the atlas and axis.	20
10	Anterior cervical spine and associated ligaments and muscles.	21
11	Lateral view of cervical spine, demonstrating facets and capsular and interspinous ligaments.	22

12	Posterior view of cervical spine, revealing ligamentum flavum as it blends into articular capsule of the facet joints.	24
13	Spinal cord.	27
14	Transverse section of the spinal cord at the level of the third cervical segment.	31
15	Transverse section of the spinal cord at the midcervical level showing the general arrangement of the ascending tracts on the right and the descending tracts on the left.	31
16	Cross section of the spinal cord with its meningeal coverings.	34
17	Arterial supply and venous drainage of spinal cord.	38
18	Vertebral column venous plexus in sagittal sections.	41
19	Cranial view of the course of the vertebral artery in the upper cervical spine.	45
20	Origin of the vertebral artery.	46
21	Arteries of the head and neck with vertebral artery	47
22	(a) Three-dimensional CT angiogram showing vertebral arteries (VA) and a type II odontoid fracture with a posterior displacement of the fractured odontoid process (O). BA= basilar artery. (b) Axial CT angiogram showing the position of the vertebral artery (VA) and the re-aligned O.	49

23	Superolateral view of the craniovertebral junction in a craniocervical cadaver. O = odontoid process, VA = vertebral artery.	49
24	Axial view of the axis from the occiput-C1 joint.	53
25	Midsagittal section through the upper cervical spine.	53
26	Posterior view of the upper cervical spine. The lamina of C1 and C2, as well as the spinal cord, has been removed to allow visualization of the ligamentous structures.	54
27	Drawings illustrating the primary movement at the occiput–C1 is flexion and extension. Mean movement is 23 to 24.5 degrees.	55
28	Drawings illustrating the primary movement at C1–C2 is axial rotation; mean movement is 23.3 to 38.9 degrees.	56
29	Drawings illustrating flexion/extension at C1–C2 ranges from 10.1 to 22.4 degrees.	57
30	Drawing showing that the anatomy of the occiput–C1–C2 region makes fixation of this region very difficult.	60
31	Spinal contour lines and lines used to diagnose cervical fractures .Lateral view through craniocervical junction.	66
32	Standard measurement technique for odontoid fracture displacement.	67

33	Lateral spine radiograph in two patients with type II odontoid fractures showing the odontoid in an anterolisthesed position on the left and in a retrolisthesed position in the patient on the right.	68
34	Anteroposterior, open-mouth radiograph showing type II fracture at the base of the odontoid.	69
35	Reconstructed images in the coronal and mid-sagittal planes from thin-section computed tomographic scans allow excellent definition of the fracture. Overlying bone, which can obscure plain film images, is eliminated.	70
36	C.T. axial cuts showing odontoid fracture.	70
37	In a mid-sagittal T2 MRI, extensive T2 signal change in the spinal cord is demonstrated, as well as a hematoma associated with spinal cord injury after odontoid fracture. This patient subsequently developed respiratory distress.	71
38	The Anderson and D'Alonzo classification of odontoid fracture. Type I fractures involve avulsion near the tip of the dens. Type II fractures occur at the base of the odontoid process. Type III fracture lines extend into the body of the axis.	74
39	The Grauer modification of the odontoid fracture classification further delineated the difference between type II and type III fractures.	75

40	The Grauer subclassification of type II odontoid fractures.	77
41	Gardner-Wells tongs are applied to the skull by threading two pins into the outer table of the cranium just superior to the external auditory meatus. This device can then be used to apply longitudinal traction via a rope, pulley, and weights.	81
42	Pheladelphia neck collar.	83
43	Miami neck collar.	85
44	Halo-vest brace.	85
45	Schematic representation of skull anatomy at a level below the equator. Dots indicate the thickest areas recommended for halo pin placement.	86
46	Diagram of recommend safe zones for placement of anterior halo pins determined by skull osteology studies.	86
47	71-year-old female presenting with a Type II fracture and fracture of the posterior ring of C1.	88
48	(a) Successful reduction in a halo-vest. (b) Posterior redislocation one week after the initial reduction.	88
49	Artist's drawing of several types of posterior C1-C2 arthrodesis constructs.	91
50	Successful C1–C2 posterior wiring with modified Gallie technique. Flexion and extension views.	92

51	Preoperative CT scan is mandatory to assess the anatomy of the C1–C2 complex in order to avoid complication with the vertebral artery or the neural elements.	94
52	Final result with flexion-extension views at three years' follow up.	96
53	Additional Gallie type wiring can be added to the transarticular screw fixation in order to obtain a 3-point fixation.	97
54	Thin-section computed tomographic reconstructions showing a suitable pathway for transarticular screw placement on the image (A), but insufficient clearance from the vertebral artery foramina (arrow) (B). In this patient, only a unilateral transarticular screw was placed.	98
55	Anatomical landmarks for C1-C2 fixation by using screws on the lateral masses of C1 and the pedicle of C2 (from Dr Mike Janssen).	100
56	Harm's technique of C1-C2 posterior fixation.	101
57	C1–C2 poliaxial fixation by using lateral masses C1 screws and C2 pedicle screws.	102
58	(a) Three-dimensional CT angiogram showing vertebral arteries (VA) and a type II odontoid fracture with a posterior displacement of the fractured odontoid process (O). BA = basilar artery. (b) Axial CT angiogram showing the position of the vertebral artery (VA) and the re-aligned O.	105

59	Odontoid screw fixation with two odontoid screws placed to restrict any possible rotation of the odontoid process in relation to C2.	106
60	Patient 1: An early-term postoperative CT scan showed the fixation of odontoid fractures using one screw.	106
61	Odontoid screw fixation performed with a single lag screw.	107
62	Anterior view of the craniovertebral junction in a craniocervical cadaver.	111
63	Fatalities/10,000 licensed motor vehicles in selected countries.	112
64	Deaths By Road User Category.	113
65	Spinal board with head bolsters and straps.	118
66	Pheladelphia neck collar	120
67	Patient on spinal board—close-up view to show the semirigid collar, bolsters and positioning of the straps.	120

Introduction

Traumatic injuries remain the leading cause of Morbidity and Mortality in children and in adult. Traumatic injuries to the spinal column are common events, with more than 50,000 fractures to the spinal column occurring annually in the United States (268). Cervical spine (C-spine) injuries are the most feared of all spinal injuries because of the potential for significant deleterious sequelae, Correlation is noted between the level of injury and morbidity/mortality i.e., the higher the level of the C-spine injury, the higher the morbidity and mortality. Craniocervical junction injuries are the deadliest , As many as 10% of unconscious patients who present to the emergency department following a motor vehicle accident (MVA) have C-spine pathology. MVAs and falls are responsible for the bulk of C2 fractures. The odontoid process (the dens) of the axis is commonly fractured, accounting for up to 20% of all acute cervical spine fractures (269).

Certain types of odontoid process fractures can lead to gross instability of the atlantoaxial complex and present a significant risk for a potentially catastrophic spinal cord injury (270).

Anderson and D'Alonzo (71): classified fractures of the odontoid process into three types

Type I is a fracture of the apical portion of the odontoid process. These fractures are rare, and whether they contribute to instability of the atlantoaxial complex is controversial. If instability is suspected in a patient with a type I fracture, dynamic imaging may reveal whether there is abnormal motion of the atlantoaxial joint.

Type II fractures involve the neck of the odontoid. These are the most common odontoid fractures and are unstable.

Type III fractures extend into the body of C2. Some type III fractures are comminuted at the base of the dens and are associated with free fracture fragments. type III fractures are typically managed with external immobilization, which is often successful; however, high odontoid process type III fractures are also amenable to surgery.

The clinical manifestations range from asymptomatic to frank paralysis. So the treatment of the a patient with cervical spine injury should be started at the scene of the injury .without exception, all victims of the trauma suspected to have a cervical injury until proven the otherwise(5). The treatment of odontoid process fractures remains controversial and ranges from external orthosis to internal fixation techniques that vary significantly.so well known of the anatomy of craniocervical junction , biomechanical movement of cranicervical junction and types of odontoid fractures which is the management of the odontoid fractures depend on , ranging from external orthosis to internal fixation techniques is so important in early diagnosing and well management of this cases which will decrease the mortality and morbidity of polytraumatised patients(271).

Aim of the Work

This work is aiming to outline and revise the anatomy of the craniocervical junction and Biomechanics of cranicervical junction and to review the classification of the odontoid fracture and recent trends for the management of the odontoid fractures.