

THE ROLE OF MAGNETIC RESONANCE IMAGING IN THE EVALUATION OF EARLY RHEUMATOID ARTHRITIS OF THE HAND AND WRIST JOINTS

Thesis

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1. INTRODUCTION AND AIM OF WORK

Introduction:

Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) has important application in musculoskeletal medicine. It is now widely used by orthopedic surgeons in the diagnosis of bone and soft tissue pathology (*McQueen, 1999*).

MRI is the only modality with the potential to show all the components of a synovial joint: bone marrow, cortical bone, hyaline cartilage, disc (when present), inflamed synovial membrane, joint capsule and ligaments (*Smith, 1992*).

Rheumatoid arthritis (RA) is a chronic systemic inflammatory illness which affects approximately 1% of the world's population. In most patients, RA leads to joint erosions with progressive joint damage, functional limitations and work disability during the initial 5 years of the disease (*Paget, 1997*) Alarming results of long-term follow-up studies indicates that active RA

carries a poor long-term prognosis with considerable disability and moderate mortality (**Gabriel S, 1999**).

Although there is no consensus on the definition of early RA, it is generally conceded that these terms refer to disease in patients who do not yet have clinical evidence of joint damage or radiologic signs of cartilage loss and/or bone erosion (**Tac P et al, 1997**).

Treatment guidelines include early diagnosis, identification of prognostic factors and early aggressive treatment.

Diagnosing RA during its early stage is important, because substantial damage occurs to the joints in the first 2 years after onset (**Brook and Corbett, 1997**) and thus allowing the early start of aggressive treatment to alleviate or forestall RA joint damage and thus improving the disease morbidity and mortality rates (**Douglas et al., 1999**).

The hand and wrist joints are the best anatomic MR imaging sites for diagnosing early RA (*Hideharu Sugimoto et al., 2000*)

Aim of Work:

The aim of this study is to evaluate the role of magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) of the hand and wrist joints in early diagnosis of RA the disease before radiological changes appear and also to assess the effect of treatment during the course of the disease.

2. Anatomy

3. Pathological consideration

4. MRI techniques and normal findings

5. Patients and Methods:

In this study, 50 patients with clinical diagnosis of RA according to the 1987 revised ACR criteria for RA will be recruited with symptoms of 6 months or less duration.

All patients will be submitted to a full clinical examination by a rheumatologist including full drug history, standard laboratory tests (CBC, ESR, CRP and RF), conventional radiological evaluation (Plain radiography) and MRI examination of the hand and wrist joints.

6. Results

7. Illustrative cases

8. Discussion

9. Summary and Conclusion

10. References

11. Arabic Summary.

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List of Contents:

	Page No
I. Introduction and Aim of work:	1-4
II. Review of literature:	5-----74
1. Anatomical review	5-46
2. Pathological review	47-57
3. Clinical review	58-74
III. Subjects and Methods	75-80
IV. Results and Illustrative cases	81-112
V. Discussion	113-129
VI. Summary and Conclusion	130-134
VII. References	135-159
VIII. Arabic Summary	160-161

List of figures:

Figure	Title	Page No
Figure (II-1)	PA view of the wrist	5
Figure (II-2)	PA view of the hand	6
Figure (II-3)	Oblique view of the hand	7
Figure (II-4)	Dorsal surface of the left hand bones	8
Figure (II-5)	Volar surface of the left hand bones	9
Figure (II-6)	Vertical section through wrist	10
Figure (II-7)	Anterior view of ligaments of wrist	12
Figure (II-8)	Diagrammatic representation of the triangular fibrocartilage complex	13
Figure (II-9)	AP of ligaments of wrist	14
Figure (II-10)	Palmar interosseous ligaments of the wrist	15

Figure (II-11)	Ulnar aspect of the metacarpophalangeal articulation and articulations of digit	15
Figure (II-12)	Palmar aspect of the muscles of the left hand	16
Figure (II-13)	The palmar aponeurosis	17
Figure (II-14)	Transverse section across the wrist and digits	18
Figure (II-15)	The mucous sheaths of the tendons on the palmar aspect of the wrist and digits	19
Figure (II-16)	Normal TFCC	24
Figure (II-17)	Normal TFCC	25
Figure (II-18)	Diagram of dorsal carpal ligaments	27
Figure (II-19)	Diagram of volar carpal ligaments	29

Figure (II-20)	Normal carpal tunnel	30
Figure (II-21)	Guyon's canal	32
Figure (II-22)	Six extensor compartments	34
Figure (II-23)	Tendons	35
Sectional Atlas	A. Normal Axial MR Anatomy.	36-41
	B. Normal Coronal MR Anatomy	42-44
	C. MR Anatomy of fingers	45-46
Figure (III-1)	MRI positioning	76
Figure (III-2)	Diagram of wrist to show sites examined for erosions and bone marrow edema on MRI	79
Figure (IV-1)	CRP and RF results of the patients with early RA	81
Figure (IV-2)	Carpal erosions detected on MR images.	82

Figure (IV-3)	Commonest sites for Carpal erosions.	82
Figure (IV-4)	Bone marrow edema detected on MR images.	83
Figure (IV-5)	Commonest sites for bone marrow edema.	83
Figure (IV-6)	Synovitis and periarticular enhancement detected on MR images.	84
Figure (IV-7)	Commonest sites for periarticular enhancement	84

List of Tables:

N^o	Table Title	Page N^o
Table III-1	MRI parameters used for imaging the wrist protocol	77
Table (IV-1)	Characteristics of the patients with early RA	81
Table (IV-2)	CRP and RF results of the patients with early RA	81