



# **SURGICAL MANAGEMENT OF ACROMIOCLAVICULAR JOINT INJURIES**

*Essay*

Submitted for Partial Fulfillment of Master Degree  
*In Orthopedic Surgery*

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2016

# List of Contents

Title	Page
▪ <b>List of Abbreviations</b> .....	I
▪ <b>List of Tables</b> .....	II
▪ <b>List of Figures</b> .....	III
▪ <b>Introduction</b> .....	1
▪ <b>Aim of the Work</b> .....	5
▪ <b>Review of Literature</b>	
- Chapter (1): Anatomy of Acromioclavicular Joint .....	6
- Chapter (2): Biomechanics of Acromioclavicular Joint .....	14
- Chapter (3): Diagnosis of Acromioclavicular Joint Injuries.....	27
- Chapter (4): Treatment of acromioclavicular joint .....	52
▪ <b>Conclusions</b> .....	129
▪ <b>Summary</b> .....	130
▪ <b>References</b> .....	132
▪ <b>Arabic Summary</b> .....	--

## List of Abbreviations

<b>AC</b> .....	Acromioclavicular
<b>ACJ</b> .....	Acromioclavicular joint
<b>ACLC</b> .....	Acromioclavicular ligament complex
<b>Add</b> .....	Adduction
<b>AP</b> .....	Antero-posterior
<b>CA</b> .....	Coraco-acromial
<b>CC</b> .....	Coraco-clavicular
<b>CL</b> .....	Clavicle
<b>Co</b> .....	Conoid
<b>DTF</b> .....	Delto-trapezoid fascia
<b>ER</b> .....	External rotation
<b>EXT</b> .....	extension
<b>Fig</b> .....	Figure
<b>FLX</b> .....	flexion
<b>IB</b> .....	Pound
<b>IR</b> .....	Internal rotation
<b>K-wire</b> .....	Kirschner wire
<b>LARS</b> .....	ligament augmentation and reconstruction system
<b>ORIF</b> .....	Open reduction internal fixation
<b>PA</b> .....	Postero-anterior
<b>ROM</b> .....	Range of motion
<b>SC</b> .....	Scapula
<b>SSSC</b> .....	Superior shoulder suspensory complex
<b>Tr</b> .....	Trapezoid

## List of Tables

Table No.	Title	Page
<b>Table (1):</b>	Classification of ac joint injuries .....	34
<b>Table (2):</b>	Showing phase 1 and phase 2 post-operative acromioclavicular reconstruction rehabilitation.....	109
<b>Table (3):</b>	Showing phase 3 and phase 4 post-operative acromioclavicular rehabilitation .....	116
<b>Table (4):</b>	Complications of acromioclavicular joint reconstruction .....	121

## List of Figures

Figure No.	Title	Page
<b>Fig. (1):</b>	Anatomic illustration of the AC and CC joint complex.....	7
<b>Fig. (2):</b>	The S-shaped clavicle is the only direct connection between the pectoral girdle and the axial skeleton...	8
<b>Fig. (3):</b>	The upper limb articulates with the pectoral girdle at the scapula .....	10
<b>Fig. (4):</b>	Axial view of the scapula and clavicle during sagittal plane elevation.....	17
<b>Fig. (5):</b>	Sagittal view of the scapula and clavicle during sagittal plane elevation .....	19
<b>Fig. (6):</b>	The direction of the in situ force in the trapezoid and conoid for superior loading.....	21
<b>Fig. (7):</b>	Most acromioclavicular injuries occur from a direct blow to the acromion as in a fall on the point of the shoulder.....	28
<b>Fig. (8):</b>	Classification of acromioclavicular joint injuries .....	33
<b>Fig. (9):</b>	Clinical finding in an acromioclavicular joint dislocation type V .....	36
<b>Fig. (10):</b>	The position of the examiner's hand for the Paxinos test .....	38
<b>Fig. (11):</b>	Crossed arms adduction maneuver .....	39

## List of Figures (Cont.)

Figure No.	Title	Page
<b>Fig.(12):</b>	The Bell-van Riet test.....	40
<b>Fig. (13):</b>	The active compression test is performed with the patients shoulder flexed to 90 degrees, adducted 10 to 15 degrees across the body, and the elbow extended.....	42
<b>Fig. (14):</b>	a-b demonstrate PA and scapular Y plain radiographs of a right shoulder with a type V AC separation .....	45
<b>Fig. (15):</b>	The Zanca AP view of the acromioclavicular joint is obtained by tilting the x-ray beam 10 degrees to 15 degrees cephalad.....	47
<b>Fig. (16):</b>	A bilateral Zanca radiograph improves detection of subtle AC Pathology by allowing a direct comparison with the contralateral shoulder.....	48
<b>Fig. (17):</b>	a, coronal plane of enhanced MR images. b, sagittal of enhanced MR images in type 2 ac joint injury representing subluxation, the acromioclavicular ligaments .....	51
<b>Fig. (18):</b>	Kenny-Howard-type shoulder immobilization brace used for acromioclavicular sprains.....	57
<b>Fig. (19):</b>	Algorithm for the treatment of type III AC separations.....	59

## List of Figures (Cont.)

Figure No.	Title	Page
<b>Fig. (20):</b>	Postoperative radiograph showing well reduction of acromioclavicular joint with Kirschner wire fixation.....	67
<b>Fig. (21):</b>	Postoperative radiograph showing well reduction of acromioclavicular joint with hook plate fixation .....	69
<b>Fig. (22):</b>	Coracoclavicular screw fixation bosworth screw fixation.....	72
<b>Fig. (23):</b>	Variation of the Weaver-Dunn procedure with transfer of the coracoacromial ligament.....	75
<b>Fig. (24):</b>	Transfer of the acromial attachment of the coracoacromial (CA) ligament.....	77
<b>Fig. (25):</b>	Double Endobutton acromio-clavicular joint re-construction technique.....	80
<b>Fig. (26):</b>	radiographic imaging showing surgical technique for CC ligament augmentation using a flip button/polyethylene belt repair .....	81
<b>Fig. (27):</b>	Direct approach on AC joint showing 2 clavicular tunnels at conoid (Co) and trap- ezoid (Tr) points with Vicryl suture .....	83
<b>Fig. (28):</b>	(A) final reconstruction before securing of last nylon knot and (B) schema of final reconstruction. One should note the nylon tape passage (blue) through the 4 bony tunnels (yellow).....	84

## List of Figures (Cont.)

Figure No.	Title	Page
<b>Fig. (29):</b>	Ac - reco - bridge technique: preparation and reduction of acromio-clavicular joint .....	87
<b>Fig. (30):</b>	Single-channel coracoclavicular suture tape stabilization.....	90
<b>Fig. (31):</b>	Morphology of acromioclavicular ligament tear patterns .....	92
<b>Fig. (32):</b>	Shuttling of FiberTape in AC-RecoBridge technique.....	95
<b>Fig. (33):</b>	Placement of the ACL guider.....	98
<b>Fig. (34):</b>	Illustration of surgical technique for CC ligament augmentation using a flip button/polyethylene belt repair .....	100
<b>Fig. (35):</b>	View of a right shoulder with a Rockwood type V acromioclavicular joint separation .....	101
<b>Fig. (36):</b>	A, Arthroscopic view of a right shoulder from the anterolateral portal depicting the undersurface of the coracoid with 2 long flip buttons in anatomical position .....	103
<b>Fig. (37):</b>	Right shoulder. Preoperative Rockwood V separation scapular-Y view (A). AP (B), scapular-Y (C), and axillary (D) views directly after operative reduction.....	104
<b>Fig. (38):</b>	Pendulum exercise Bend over at the waist and let the arm hang down.....	111



## List of Figures (Cont.)

Figure No.	Title	Page
<b>Fig. (39):</b>	Supine passive arm elevation Lie on your back. Hold the affected arm at the wrist with the opposite hand .....	111
<b>Fig. (40):</b>	Supine external rotation Lie on your back. Keep the elbow of the affected arm against your side with the elbow bent at 90 degrees.....	112
<b>Fig. (41):</b>	Behind-the-back internal rotation Sitting in a chair or standing, place the hand of the operated arm behind your back at the waistline .....	113
<b>Fig. (42):</b>	Hand-behind-the-head stretch Lie on your back.....	114
<b>Fig. (43):</b>	Sidelying internal rotation stretch Lie on your side with the arm positioned so that the arm is at a right angle to the body and the elbow bent at a 90° angle.....	115
<b>Fig. (44):</b>	External rotation at 90° abduction exercise.....	118
<b>Fig. (45):</b>	Seated row exercise.....	119
<b>Fig. (46):</b>	Two examples of migration of smooth pins in the lung (A) and mediastinum (with broken tip in the pericardial sac (B) used for AC joint fixation following AC separation .....	125

### **Abstract**

There are two etiologies of injury to acromioclavicular joint, the first by direct blow to the lateral aspect of the shoulder with arm adducted, and the second by indirect force by falling on an outstretched hand.

Diagnosis of these injuries depends on clinical presentation, physical examination and imaging studies, and it is classified in to 6 degrees of injuries.

Treatment is conservative for type one and two injuries and surgical for type 4, 5 and 6. Type 3 management is controversial, Surgical treatment may be open surgical or arthroscopic.

**Keyword:**

Acromioclavicular; Surgical Management injuries;  
Arthroscopic.

## INTRODUCTION

Injuries to the acromioclavicular joint account for approximately 12% of injuries to the shoulder girdle seen in clinical practice<sup>(1)</sup>. They are between five and ten times more common in males<sup>(2)</sup>.

The acromioclavicular joint provides a 'keystone' link between the scapula and the clavicle<sup>(3)</sup>. The joint is surrounded by a thin fibrous capsule which is reinforced by the superior, inferior, anterior and posterior acromioclavicular ligaments. The superior and posterior components provide the most significant contribution to horizontal stability at the joint, and the coracoclavicular ligament which consists of the conoid and trapezoid components which stabilize the acromioclavicular articulation and co-ordinate scapulothoracic rotation during abduction and flexion of the shoulder<sup>(4)</sup>.

Until recently, movement at the acromioclavicular joint had not been accurately defined and was perhaps underestimated. It is now appreciated that during abduction of the shoulder, there is 15° of protraction, 21° of upward rotation and 22° of posterior tilting of the scapula relative to the clavicle at the joint<sup>(5)</sup>.

Tossy, Mead and Sigmond, described three types of acromioclavicular injuries, to which Rockwood et al added a further three subgroups<sup>(2)</sup>.

In type-I injuries, there is partial and in type II complete disruption of the acromioclavicular ligaments. In type-III injuries, the vertical translation at the joint is up to the width of the clavicle while in type IV, the clavicle is displaced posteriorly through the trapezius. In type-V injuries the degree of separation is greater because of the concomitant disruption of the deltotrapius fascia attached to the lateral end of the clavicle, allowing the end of the clavicle to lie subcutaneously. In the very rare type-VI injury, the clavicle is displaced inferiorly and comes to lie below the coracoid process underneath the conjoint tendon<sup>(6)</sup>.

The clinical diagnosis of an acute acromioclavicular injury is usually relatively simple since the pain is commonly localized accurately to the area of the joint. The joint is tender to palpation and the clavicle often feels mobile. It is specific for injury to the acromioclavicular joint only if pain is localized to the joint<sup>(7)</sup>.

The grading of the injury is made on radiological examination as determined by the extent of displacement of the articular surfaces.

Ultrasound and MRI are not widely used, but can be employed to detect effusions from the joint, assess the extent of injury to the ligaments and the deltotrapius aponeurosis, and to determine the degree of degenerative changes in patients who develop delayed symptoms<sup>(8)</sup>.

The aim of the treatment of acromioclavicular joint injury should be to return the patient to the level of function before injury, with a pain-free, strong and mobile shoulder<sup>(3)</sup>.

Conservative treatment is almost universally applicable to type-I and type-II injuries, The most common form of non-operative treatment involves simple analgesia, topical ice therapy and rest in a sling to give relief from symptoms<sup>(1)</sup>.

Contact sports and heavy lifting should be avoided for 8 to 12 weeks after injury<sup>(9)</sup>, Operation may be considered for these patients if they have ongoing symptoms at three months after the original injury. Conservative treatment also remains the preferred initial mode of management for most type-III injuries because of the excellent prognosis in most patients with this injury, Secondary surgical reconstruction is seldom needed<sup>(10)</sup>.

Operation is used to treat patients with type- IV and type-V injuries<sup>(12)</sup> Type-VI injuries are very rare, and almost all reported cases have been treated surgically<sup>(4)</sup>.

A wide variety of operative procedures has been described, but none has been shown to be notably superior to the others. Accurate reduction of the joint is easier when surgery is performed within the first two weeks after injury, when the ruptured ligamentous restraints can often be

repaired directly. Most techniques of reconstruction in the acute injury involve reduction of the joint, ligamentous repair and stabilization of the joint, whereas in most delayed reconstructions an excision of the lateral end of the clavicle is performed before reduction, with stability restored by ligamentous substitution<sup>(3)</sup>.

Surgical approach may be open or arthroscopic. The postoperative rehabilitation protocol varies for different techniques of reconstruction<sup>(12)</sup>.