

# OUTCOME OF RIGID INTERNAL FIXATION OF MANDIBULAR FRACTURES: A PROSPECTIVE STUDY

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## ABSTRACT

*This prospective study was undertaken to analyze the postoperative outcome in 80 mandibular fracture patients treated by open reduction and internal fixation at Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery Unit, Khyber College of Dentistry, Peshawar from Jan 2006 to June 2007. Data regarding the pattern of fracture and postoperative outcome was evaluated and reviewed. The most common cause of fracture was road traffic accident and common site was parasymphysis. Sixty two patients (n=62; 77%) had successful uneventful postoperative outcome. Infection was the common complication (n=7; 8.7%) followed by malocclusion (n=5; 6.2%).*

**Key words:** Mandibular fracture, rigid internal fixation, postoperative complications

## INTRODUCTION

Mandibular fractures are one of the most common fractures of facial skeleton because of its prominent position in maxillofacial region.<sup>1</sup> They may occur alone or in combination with other facial bone fractures.<sup>2</sup> Fracture site depends upon the mechanism of injury, magnitude and direction of impact force, prominence of the mandible and anatomy of site.<sup>3</sup>

Management of mandibular fractures varies among maxillofacial units across the world. It depends upon the clinical presentation, surgical expertise of operator and facilities available at maxillofacial surgery units. Traditionally, surgeons have attempted to achieve four main goals while treating mandibular fractures: anatomic reduction, immobilization, prevention of infection and rehabilitation of function. Meeting these goals are essential for successful bone healing and correct postoperative functioning of stomatognathic system.<sup>4</sup> To restore esthetics and early functional recovery to life, maxillofacial surgeons have innovated surgical techniques to provide better options in the management of mandibular fractures.<sup>5</sup> Current established

trends in the management of mandibular fractures include closed reduction with intermaxillary fixation (IMF) by dental wiring, Arch bars and Gunning's splints, open reduction and intraosseous wiring and IMF and open reduction and rigid internal fixation by miniplates, non-compression plates, compression plates and lag screws.<sup>4,6</sup> Rigid internal fixation promotes primary bone healing without the extended period of intermaxillary fixation for immobilization. The elimination of IMF, generally, results in earlier jaw function, easier maintenance of oral hygiene and better nutrition.<sup>7</sup> Early mobilization prevents the chances of ankylosis particularly in children and reduces the chances of postoperative complications in poly-traumatized and immobilized patients.<sup>8</sup> It prevents life threatening events in mentally disabled, epileptics, war injuries and multiple traumas.<sup>4</sup>

However, despite having these advantages the rigid internal fixation has been criticized for having increased morbidity, difficulty of procedure, increased operating time, cost of the equipment, necessity of the second operation for the removal of plates and prolonged hospital stay.<sup>6,9</sup> In addition, this modality of

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treatment has resulted in postoperative complications that are different from those of traditional methods.<sup>10</sup> Postoperative malocclusion will result by placing the plates incorrectly during fixation. Extra-oral and intra-oral approaches may result in nerve damage and externally visible scar. There may be damage to dental roots or these plates may be a constant source of infection.<sup>9</sup>

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the postoperative benefits and complications associated with open reduction and rigid internal fixation (ORIF). This study will help us regarding the measures to be taken in anticipation for the reduction of postoperative complications.

**MATERIALS AND METHODS**

This clinical study had been carried out on 80 patients presented to Oral and Dental Hospital, Khyber college of Dentistry, Peshawar from Jan 2006 to June 2007. Patients diagnosed with mandibular fractures, treated with open reduction and rigid internal fixation and associated with no other facial fractures were included in study. Condylar fractures, pathological fractures and patients having any severe systemic disease were excluded from the study. With the consent of the patients all the necessary information about the variables of the study written in preformed proforma were collected by history taking and meticulous clinical examination. Preoperative infection, occlusion and sensory disturbances were assessed and evaluated by clinical examination. Patients were followed for normal union, infection, non union, malunion, malocclusion and 5<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> nerve disturbances. The data so obtained were evaluated and analyzed by applying descriptive statistics.

**RESULTS**

The most common age group involved was 21-30 years with a mean value of 24.9 ± 15.4 years. Regarding gender distribution most patients were male with a male to female ratio of 5.6:1.

The most common cause of injury was road traffic accidents (n=37; 38.7%) followed by fall (n=25; 31.25%). Common site of fracture was parasymphysis (n=26; 32.5%) followed by angle (n=22; 27.5%), (Table 1).

Overall, 62 patients had a successful (77%) result characterized by anatomic reduction, clinical union, restoration of pre-traumatic occlusion and normal function. Infection was the most common complication (n=7; 8.7%) followed by malocclusion (n=5; 6.2%) malunion and 5<sup>th</sup> nerve injury (n=3; 3.7%), (Table 2)

TABLE 1: DISTRIBUTION OF MANDIBULAR FRACTURES ACCORDING TO SITE

Site	No. of fractures	%age
Symphysis	13	16.2
Parasymphysis	26	32.5
Body	17	21.2
Angle	22	27.5
Ramus	2	2.5
Total	80	100

TABLE 2: POSTOPERATIVE OUTCOME

Study variable	No	%age
Normal union	77	96.2
Non-union	0	0
Malunion	3	3.7
Delayed union	0	0
Infection	7	8.7
Malocclusion	5	6.2
5 <sup>th</sup> nerve injury	3	3.7
7 <sup>th</sup> nerve injury	0	0

**DISCUSSION**

The goal of any fracture management is the restoration of form and function with minimal morbidity. During the present study, the leading cause of the fractures was RTA and the common site was parasymphysis. These findings are in agreement with the previous studies<sup>2, 11, 12, 13, 14</sup>. Bony union is expected to result in 4-6 weeks with proper reduction and immobilization. Ninety six percent of patients had clinically successful outcome of normal bony union. The results of this study coincide with the study of Iizuka T and Lindqvist C<sup>15</sup> who reported 93.9% normal union in mandibular fractures. This study also correlates with the study of Peled M et al<sup>4</sup> and Dodson TB et al<sup>7</sup>, 83% and 82.6% respectively.

Infection rate of 3% to 27% has been reported with the use of ORIF in previous studies<sup>9, 16, 17</sup>. Pattern of

fracture, technical errors, lack of prophylactic antibiotics, mobility at fracture site and non compliance of patient are considered the predisposing factors for infection.<sup>5, 16, 18</sup> The current study shows infection being the common complication (8.7%). Five patients responded to antibiotics and two patients to early plate removal. Similar rate of infection had been reported in previous studies.<sup>4, 19, 20, 21, 22</sup> Some studies have documented higher infection rate in rigid internal fixation. A study by Moreno JC et al<sup>10</sup> reported 12.5% and Renton TF et al<sup>9</sup> 15%, while the study of Jaques B et al<sup>21</sup> shows 2.9% infection which is less than those reported in literature and in the current study.

The second most common complication noted was post surgical malocclusion (6.2%). Malocclusion was based on evaluation of occlusion, checked for maximum interdilatation, midline relationship, molar relationship, attrition wear facets relationship and patient complains. The presence of post surgical malocclusion depends on patient's dental status, the number of fractures, type of fracture, the degree of displacement of fragments, type of reduction, fixation and immobilization. Previous reports of Smith WP<sup>20</sup> (7.5%), Cawood JI<sup>19</sup> (8%), Peled M and coworkers<sup>4</sup> (7.8%) and Dodson TB and coworkers<sup>7</sup> (7.7%) also coincides with the present study. Some studies had reported different percentage of malocclusion in rigid internal fixation ranged from 2.5% to 18.2%<sup>5, 15, 24</sup>. The postoperative malocclusion noted was minimal and was treated by selective occlusal grinding.

Malunion is the healing of bone segments in a non physiologic position due to inadequate treatment of displaced fractures. It may occur as a result of plate bending or poor intra-operative reduction of fractured segments. The malunion encountered in this study was minor in nature and required no surgical intervention. The occlusal discrepancies were eradicated with occlusal equilibrium procedures.

Sensory disturbances were recorded according to patient's complaint. Sensory disturbances were recorded as the disturbances of inferior alveolar nerve, mental nerve and lingual nerve. Sensory disturbances of two mental nerves and one inferior alveolar nerve were recorded. It was due to elevation of flap and inadvertent placement of screws in the course of nerves. In this study there was no record of any involvement of the mandibular branch of the facial

nerve as has been reported by Iizuka and Lindqvist<sup>15</sup> and Dodson TB et al<sup>7</sup>. Schon R et al<sup>23</sup> reported 3% and Jaques B et al<sup>6</sup> 1.45% sensory disturbances in mental nerve while Cabrini Gabrielli MA et al<sup>24</sup> reported 0.89% paraesthesia in I.D. nerve after applying rigid fixation while Iizuka T and Lindqvist C<sup>15</sup> reported a higher number of sensory disturbances in rigid fixation. During open reduction mental, inferior alveolar and marginal mandibular branches of facial nerve are at high risk of injury. In this study all patients with sensory disturbances were treated conservatively.

## CONCLUSION

Osteosynthesis by open reduction and internal fixation provides optimal stability for healing and allow immediate function of stomatognathic system. It was noted that rigid internal fixation by plates and screws provide precise reduction, superior esthetic results, increased comfort and safety of patients, early restoration of functional life and low rate of complications in hands of experienced surgeons. Further, more controlled prospective studies on open reduction and rigid internal fixation of mandibular fractures are necessary to establish clinical protocols.

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