

## EVALUATION OF RESULTS OF MINIMALLY INVASIVE PLATING OSTEOSYNTHESIS (MIPO) TECHNIQUE IN THE TREATMENT OF FRACTURES OF DISTAL TIBIA

Niraj Singh<sup>1</sup>, Ashish Kumar Paswan<sup>1</sup>, Govind Mohan Jee<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Senior Resident, Department of Orthopaedics, Darbhanga medical college, Laheriasarai, Bihar, India.

<sup>2</sup>Professor, Department of Orthopaedics, Darbhanga medical college, Laheriasarai, Bihar, India.

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Corresponding Author:

**Dr. Ashish Kumar Paswan,**  
Email: ashish111256@gmail.com

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**Abstract**

**Background:** The fractures of distal tibia including tibial pilon pose great challenge to the surgeon due to subcutaneous location, scarcity of blood supply and paucity of soft tissue coverage. This led to change in the philosophy of treating such injuries. Currently, two methods are gaining popularity. One method is wire fixators, which is useful in highly comminuted fractures with significant soft tissue damage.[4] Other is MIPO technique (Minimal invasive plating osteosynthesis) when there is minimal articular comminution and the soft tissue envelop is minimally damaged. **Materials and Methods:** This study was conducted in Department of Orthopaedic, Darbhanga Medical College and Hospital, Laheriasarai during the period May 2022 to April 2023. Total 25 patients of distal tibial fracture were managed and evaluated during the study period. The objective was to evaluate functional and clinical outcome of MIPO technique in distal tibial fractures, in patients of age group 20 years and above. A vertical or curvilinear incision was made at the level of medial malleolus with utmost care not to injure saphenous vein and nerve. Subcutaneous plane was made with hemostat without stripping periosteum and disturbance to fracture haemotoma. Fracture was reduced under C-arm, sometimes 3mm K-wire is used as joystick to aid in fracture reduction and towel-clip or reduction clamp to hold reduction. **Result:** There were 25 patients of distal tibial fracture operated with MIPO technique among which 20 were males and 5 females with a mean age of 39.85years (range of 20-67 yrs). As per AO classification, 19 patients sustained extra-articular fractures (type A) and 04 intra-articular fractures (type B-02, type C-02). **Conclusion:** Outcome of 85% cases from the study we conclude that MIPO is an effective technique for the management of distal tibial fractures.

## INTRODUCTION

The fractures of distal tibia including tibial pilon pose great challenge to the surgeon due to subcutaneous location, scarcity of blood supply and paucity of soft tissue coverage.<sup>[1]</sup> The involvement of the ankle joint and the vulnerability of the surrounding soft tissues further complicate these already complex injuries.<sup>[2]</sup> Numerous classifications have been proposed for these fractures; however AOOTTA alphanumeric classification is the most comprehensive and commonly quoted classification. Ruedi and Allgower popularized open reduction and internal fixation for these fractures. However, their impressive results were not paralleled by other authors and subsequent reports showed significant number of major complications which are mainly attributed to damage of soft tissues.<sup>[3]</sup> This led to change in the philosophy of treating such injuries. Currently, two methods are

gaining popularity. One method is wire fixators, which is useful in highly comminuted fractures with significant soft tissue damage.<sup>[4]</sup> Other is MIPO technique (Minimal invasive plating osteosynthesis) when there is minimal articular comminution and the soft tissue envelop is minimally damaged.<sup>[5]</sup> It works on Biological Fixation Principle, in which blood supply to the fracture fragments is maximally preserved and percutaneously inserted plate is placed epiperiosteally and fixed at a distance proximal and distal to the fracture site through minimal exposure. Principles of Biological Fixation in MIPO are as follows:

1. Repositioning and realigning by manipulation at a distance to the fracture site, preserving soft tissues (indirect reduction technique).
2. Leaving comminuted fragments out of the mechanical construct, while preserving their blood supply.

3. Using low elastic modulus, biocompatible material.
4. Limited operative exposure.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study was conducted in Department of Orthopaedic, Darbhanga Medical College and Hospital, Laheriasrai during the period May 2022 to April 2023. Total 25 patients of distal tibial fracture were managed and evaluated during the study period. The objective was to evaluate functional and clinical outcome of MIPO technique in distal tibial fractures, in patients of age group 20 years and above. Fractures were classified as per AO Classification and Type A, Type B and Type C1 were included in the study. [Figure 1] Patients with open fractures except grade I, severely crushed and contaminated, those associated with major head injuries and injuries presented AO-OTA types C2, C3 were excluded from the study. The associated injury, routine pre-anesthetic investigation, standard anteroposterior and lateral radiographs of the ankle joint which included the tibia were recorded [Figure 2]. The patients with closed fracture were treated by anti-edema drug for 5-7 days until the skin was wrinkled. Preoperative antibiotics (first-generation cephalosporin) were administered 30 minutes before the operation.

Figure 1: AO/OTA Classification of Distal Tibial fracture. Three types i.e. extra-articular, partial articular, and complete articular and nine groups based on the amount of comminution

A vertical or curvilinear incision was made at the level of medial malleolus with utmost care not to injure saphenous vein and nerve. Subcutaneous plane was made with hemostat without stripping periosteum and disturbance to fracture haematoma. Fracture was reduced under C-arm, sometimes 3mm K-wire is used as joystick to aid in fracture reduction and towel-clip or reduction clamp to hold reduction. Pre-contoured low metaphyseal plate LCP was tunneled into subcutaneous plane and its position was confirmed under fluoroscopy.

Figure 2: Anteroposterior and lateral view of distal tibial fracture

Biomechanically locking plates can be described as single beam construct, fixed angle device acting as internal fixator. Single beam construct means when there is no motion in between components of beam i.e. screw, plate and bone. Single beam construct is four times stronger than load shearing beam construct where motion occurs between individual components of the beam. Fixed angle device implies that as locking plate convert shearing stress to compressive stress at screw-bone interface there is improve in fixation since the bone has much higher resistance to compressive stress than shearing stress. As screws are locked to the plate, the strength of fixation in locking plate equals the sum of all screw-bone interfaces rather than the single screw's axial stiffness or pull-out resistance as seen in unlocked plate. Locking plates acts as internal fixator in which

locking screws can be imagined as Schanz pin and locking plate as connecting tubular rod. This internal fixator is more rigid than external fixator as it is placed nearer to the bone. This optimizes strain at the fracture site, resulting into callus formation. As stability of this internal fixator does not depend upon frictional forces between plate and bone, periosteal perfusion does not get hampered. Theoretically, this result into rapid healing decreased bone necrosis and infection. Stress shielding is also avoided which decreases the chances of refracture after implant removal. Currently, used LCP has Combi holes which allows placement of both locking and non locking screws but lag screw is to be placed before locking screws.

### POST-OPERATIVE

Depending upon the fracture configuration and stability of reduction achieved, the mobilization was modified. In most cases the protocol followed was; Static quadriceps- day1, gradual active knee and ankle mobilization -day3, crutch supported toe-touch ambulation-day 7, partial weight bearing from 6th week and full weight bearing was allowed 12th week onwards. The patient was scheduled for follow-ups every 4 weeks until the fracture united. Wound condition and range of motion of ankle were evaluated and a radiograph of distal tibia was taken. Fracture healing was defined as radiological evidence of bridging mature callus in at least three cortices as seen in both anteroposterior and lateral radiographs. The functional outcome was evaluated with the clinical rating system for the ankle by Teeny and Wiss criteria at every 6 months follow-up [Table 1] and graded as Excellent (>92 points), good (87-92points), fair (65-86 points) and poor (<65 points).

## RESULTS

There were 25 patients of distal tibial fracture operated with MIPO technique among which 20 were males and 5 females with a mean age of 39.85years (range of 20-67 yrs). As per AO classification, 19 patients sustained extra-articular fractures (type A) and 04 intra-articular fractures (type B-02, type C-02). High energy trauma predominated in this study, causing 13 fractures. Average trauma surgery interval in this study was 12 days (02-22days). Complications like superficial wound infection was seen in 02 cases, surgical wound breakdown with implant exposed in 02 case which healed with antibiotic and daily dressing and prominent hardware was seen in 02 case which was asymptomatic. According to the Teeny and Wiss criteria 19 patients (87%) had excellent/good outcome and three cases with complications had fair outcome in 03 cases and poor in 02 case.

## DISCUSSION

Distal tibia fracture with or without intra articular extension is one of the difficult fractures to manage.

None of the treatment options available perfectly fulfill requirements of fracture characteristics of distal tibia. The goals of treatment of a distal tibia fracture are anatomical articular reduction, restoration of axial alignment, maintenance of joint stability, achievement of fracture union, pain free weight bearing and motion, without any wound complications.<sup>[6]</sup> The treatment plan in distal tibia fracture depends on fracture pattern, soft tissue injury, patient co-morbidity, fixation resources, and surgical experience. Distal tibia has got circular cross sectional area with thinner cortex as compare to triangular diaphysis with thicker cortex. So intramedullary nail which is designed for tight interference fit at diaphysis cannot provide same stability at distal fracture.<sup>[7]</sup> Other potential complications of IMIL nailing are malunion (0-28%) and implant failure (5-38%). ORIF with conventional plate which needs stripping of periosteum is also not an ideal treatment option because tibia is subcutaneous bone and periosteum provides 2/3rd of blood supply. Non-union, delayed union and infection are reported with the range of 8.4-34% and 8.4-26% respectively with ORIF plating.<sup>[8]</sup> The disadvantage of MIPO is more radiation exposure to the operating team compared with ORIF as it uses indirect reduction under fluoroscopy. However, the advantage of MIPO is soft tissue preservation under treatment with skillful surgeons and may lower the risk of radiation exposure and avoid unfavorable results. Similarly external fixators as a definitive method of treatment for distal tibia fracture are also reported with higher rate of infection, implant failure and malunion or non-union and hence recommended only for temporary method of stabilization in open fracture with severe soft tissue injury.<sup>[9]</sup> With the development of technique of MIPO with LCP which preserve extra osseous blood supply, respect osteogenic fracture haematoma, biologically friendly and stable fixation method is available for distal tibia fracture. Indirect reduction method and subcutaneous tunneling of the plate and application of locking screws with small skin incisions in MIPO technique prevents iatrogenic injury to vascular supply of the bone. The average age incidence in this study is 39.85 yrs (range 20 yrs-67 yrs) and sex distribution is of 20 males (75%) and 5 females (25%), showing similarity with other studies Hazarika S et al (2006), Vasu Pai et al (2006), Ghulam Shabbir et al (2011), Shreshta et al (2011).<sup>[10,11]</sup> The high association of distal tibial fracture in males can be attributed to our Indian set up where female largely work indoor and do not travel much. High energy trauma, road traffic accidents predominate causing 50% of the fractures and has been similarly reported by studies in Neeraj mahajan(2008), Ghulam Shabbir et al (2011), Shreshta et al (2011).<sup>[12]</sup> Average trauma surgery interval in this study was 12 days (range 02-22 days) which is more than other studies of Ghulam Shabbir et al (2011), Shreshta et al (2011) where average range is 1-10 days.<sup>[13]</sup> This is due to delay in reporting

of patients to hospital and some institutional cause like lack of theater days and delay in pre-anesthetic fitness for surgery Radiologic union and full weight bearing was achieved in 13-16 weeks in 75% of cases while in 25% it was seen in 17-20 weeks showing similarity with other studies Hazarika S et al (2006), Vasu Pai et al (2006), Neeraj mahajan (2008), Ghulam Shabbir et al (2011) and Shreshta et al (2011).<sup>[14]</sup> In Type A fracture, excellent/ good results as per Teeny & Wiss criteria were seen in 14 out of 17 cases, fair in 02 cases and 01 case has shown poor result.<sup>[15]</sup> In Type B fracture excellent result in 02 cases and in type C fracture good result in 01 case. On overall assessment of results we are able to achieve 75% excellent results, 10% good results, 10% fair results and 5% with poor results. Indirect reduction of fracture under fluoroscopy is difficult at time.<sup>[16]</sup> Various reduction maneuvers such as calcaneal pin traction, external fixators or mechanical distractors have been described to achieve reduction. In this study, Kirschner wire (3mm) has been used as a joystick or a towel clip after making small opening at fracture site whenever reduction could not be achieved by mechanical traction. Concomitant fibula fracture also play the role in success of reduction especially when fracture is at same level of tibia. Some authors recommend fibula fixations before tibia fixation to achieve better tibial alignment and to prevent valgus malalignment but clear indication for fibula fixation is still lacking and controversial. In this study, 04 cases were treated with fibular plating along with tibial fixation due to syndesmosis involvement.<sup>[17]</sup> Complications like superficial wound infection in 03 cases and surgical wound breakdown with implant exposure in 02 case might be attributed to nosocomial infection which healed with antibiotics and daily dressing. Good preparation of soft tissue in preoperative program can reduce superficial wound infection. Prominent hardware was due to lean and thin patient but it did not require any treatment as it was of asymptomatic nature.

## CONCLUSION

Limited number of patients in the study, short duration of follow up and evaluation of extraarticular and intra-articular fracture in same study has limited the final result. Further studies with longer follow up and large sample size will give addition aid to results. But based on favorable outcome of 85% cases from the study we conclude that MIPO is an effective technique for the management of distal tibial fractures.

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