

Department of Orthopaedic Surgery, Kärnsjukhuset, Skövde, Sweden.

PATELLA CUBITI

Report of an Operated Case

SVEN-ARNE AHLGREN & ANDERS RYDHOLM

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Patella cubiti is a rare condition. Only occasional cases have been published and, as far as we know, none from Scandinavia.

CASE REPORT

A 45-year-old farm labourer sought medical advice because of incapacitating pain in his right elbow. As long as he could remember he had never been able to extend his right elbow fully. There was no history of a trauma. According to the patient his parents, brothers, sisters and cousins had normal elbows.

Examination of the right elbow revealed some tenderness to palpation around the olecranon, an extension defect of 35°, 130° flexion and full pronation and supination. Also extension against resistance and forced flexion were somewhat painful. The roentgenographic appearance of the elbow is illustrated in Figure 1.

The left elbow was normal.

A period of rest did not produce the desired result and it was reluctantly decided to extirpate the bone fragment. After the fragment was removed from the triceps tendon, the elbow was immobilized in plaster for 17 days, followed by active exercises. Two months after operation the patient returned to work.

At review 2 years after the operation, the patient was still working full-time at the same job. He was quite satisfied with his elbow and thought that its mobility had increased slightly after the operation. Examination revealed that the extension defect had decreased by 5° and flexion had increased by 10° since the operation. Pronation and supination were still full and equal on both sides. Extension against resistance was good and painless. The roentgenographic appearance is shown in Figure 2.



Figure 1. Right elbow, lateral view. Typical appearance of patella cubiti.

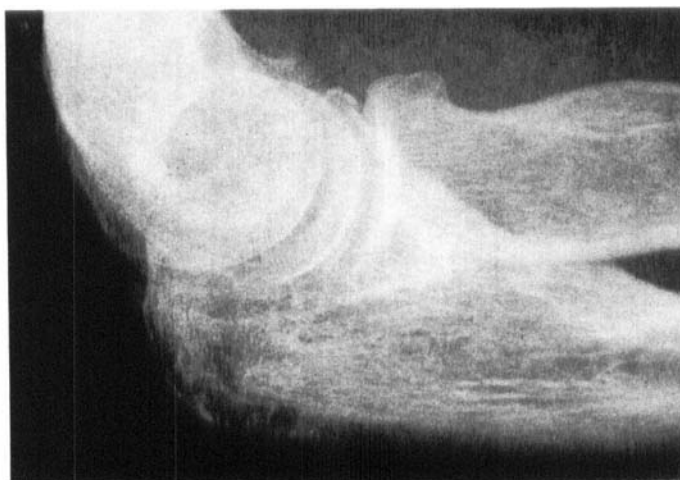


Figure 2. Right elbow, lateral view, 2 years after extirpation of the patella cubiti.

COMMENT

It is still debatable whether patella cubiti is congenital or of traumatic origin (Kienböck 1903, 1914, Gunn 1927, Rostock 1933, Zeitlin 1935, Habbe 1942, Gunn 1965, Mackenzie & Pugh 1972). At least in the present case the condition appeared to be congenital.

Few operated cases have been published (Rostock 1931, 1933, Levine 1950, Mackenzie & Pugh 1972). In the present case removal of the bone

fragment eliminated the pain and enabled the patient to return to his work as a farm labourer.

SUMMARY

A case of incapacitating patella cubiti, probably of congenital origin, in a 45-year-old farm labourer is described. The fragment was extirpated, the pain disappeared and the patient returned to work.

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Correspondence to:

Sven-Arne Ahlgren
 Department of Orthopaedic Surgery
 Kärnshuset
 S-541 01 Skövde
 Sweden