Chondrolabral Junction Breakdown Predicts Conversion to Total Hip Arthroplasty After Hip Arthroscopy for Symptomatic Labral Tears: Mean 11-Year Follow-up

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DISCLOSURES: None.

INTRODUCTION: Arthroscopic treatment of symptomatic labral tears and/or femoroacetabular impingement (FAI) confers short- to midterm benefits, yet additional long-term evidence is warranted. Moreover, despite emerging research revealing the physiologic and biomechanical significance of the chondrolabral junction (CLJ), the clinical implications of damage to this transition zone remain understudied. The purpose of this study was: to (1) report long-term survivorship and patient-reported outcome measures (PROMs) following arthroscopic labral repair or debridement and (2) characterize associations between outcomes and patient demographics, pathological parameters, and procedures performed.

METHODS: This retrospective cohort study included patients who underwent primary hip arthroscopy for symptomatic labral tears (with or without concomitant FAI) by a single surgeon from 2002-2013. All patients were ≥18 years with minimum 8-year follow-up and available preoperative radiographs. The primary outcome was conversion to total hip arthroplasty (THA), and secondary outcomes included revision arthroscopy, PROMs, and patient satisfaction. Kaplan-Meier estimates and weighted Cox regression were used to estimate 10-year survivorship and identify risk factors associated with conversion to THA.

RESULTS: In this study of 174 hips (50.6% female; mean age: 37.8 ± 11.2) with mean follow-up of 11.1 ± 2.5 years, the 10-year survivorship rate was 81.6% (95% CI: 75.9-87.7%). On average, conversion to THA occurred 4.7 ± 3.8 years postoperatively. Unadjusted analyses revealed several variables significantly associated with THA conversion, including older age, higher body mass index, higher Tönnis grade, labral debridement, and advanced damage to the CLJ, labrum, or articular cartilage. Survivorship at 10 years was inferior in patients exhibiting severe (43.6%; 95% CI: 31.9-59.7%) versus mild (97.9%; 95% CI: 95.1-100%) degeneration of the CLJ (p<0.001). Multivariable analysis identified worsening CLJ breakdown (weighted hazard ratio, per 1-unit increase: 6.41; 95% CI: 3.11-13.24), older age (1.09; 95% CI: 1.04-1.14), and higher Tönnis grade (4.59; 95% CI: 2.13-9.90) as independent negative prognosticators (p<0.001 for all).

DISCUSSION: Although most patients achieved favorable long-term outcomes, several pre- and intraoperative factors portended THA conversion, with CLJ breakdown emerging as the strongest indicator.

SIGNIFICANCE/CLINICAL RELEVANCE: These results may support preoperative risk stratification and shared decision-making as imaging techniques continue to be developed. Altogether, findings from the present study have several notable implications on the surgical management of the CLJ and its surrounding structures, preoperative imaging and risk stratification, and the further development of regenerative therapies.

Table 1. Baseline patient demographics and radiographic findings*

	Total	Conversion to THA	No Conversion to THA	P value
	n = 174	n = 34	n = 140	
Age	37.8 ± 11.2	47.2 ± 9.3	35.5 ± 10.4	**<0.001**
Body mass index (kg/m²)	26.3 ± 4.5	27.9 ± 4.7	25.9 ± 4.4	**0.023**
Sex				0.80
Female	88 (50.6)	16 (47.1)	72 (51.4)	
Male	86 (49.4)	18 (52.9)	68 (48.6)	
Race				0.09
Asian	2 (1.1)	2 (5.9)	0 (0.0)	
Black	2 (1.1)	0 (0.0)	2 (1.4)	
White	167 (96.0)	32 (94.1)	135 (96.4)	
Other or not reported	3 (1.7)	0 (0.0)	3 (2.1)	
Ethnicity				0.58
Hispanic	5 (2.9)	0 (0.0)	5 (3.6)	
Not Hispanic	169 (97.1)	34 (100.0)	135 (96.4)	
Laterality				0.35
Left	72 (41.4)	17 (50.0)	55 (39.3)	
Right	102 (58.6)	17 (50.0)	85 (60.7)	
Tönnis classification				**<0.001**
Grade 0	21 (12.1)	0 (0.0)	21 (15.0)	
Grade 1	115 (66.1)	11 (32.4)	104 (74.3)	
Grade 2	35 (20.1)	20 (58.8)	15 (10.7)	
Grade 3	3 (1.7)	3 (8.8)	0 (0.0)	
Tönnis angle (degrees)	6.9 ± 5.5	10.6 ± 6.2	6.1 ± 4.9	**<0.001**
LCEa (degrees)	35.5 ± 5.9	35.8 ± 5.3	35.4 ± 6.0	0.76
Alpha angle (degrees)	57.9 ± 18.4	68.7 ± 20.2	55.3 ± 17.0	**<0.001**
Average joint space (mm)	4.0 ± 0.7	3.6 ± 0.9	4.1 ± 0.7	**<0.001**
Type of FAI				0.056
Isolated pincer	17 (9.8)	2 (5.9)	15 (10.7)	
Isolated cam	72 (41.4)	19 (55.9)	53 (37.9)	
Combined	20 (11.5)	6 (17.6)	14 (10.0)	
None	65 (37.4)	7 (20.6)	58 (41.4)	

*Data are reported as mean ± standard deviation or No. of patients (%). Boldface denotes statistical significance (p<0.05).
Abbreviations: THA, total hip arthroplasty; LCEa, lateral center-edge angle; FAI, femoroacetabular impingement.

Table 2. Weighted Cox regression adjusting for patient characteristics and variable follow-up

Variable	Hazard ratio (95% CI)	P Value
Age, per 1-year increase	1.09 (1.04, 1.14)	**<0.001**
Tönnis grade, per 1-unit increase	4.59 (2.13, 9.90)	**<0.001**
Labral repair (relative to debridement)	1.67 (0.66, 4.23)	0.28
Beck classification of CLJ injury, per 1-unit increase	6.41 (3.11, 13.24)	**<0.001**
Beck classification of labral damage, per 1-unit increase	1.28 (0.81, 2.03)	0.29
Outerbridge grade, per 1-unit increase*	0.46 (0.14, 1.51)	0.20

*Worst degree of change between the acetabulum and femoral head. Boldface denotes statistical significance. CI, confidence interval; CLJ, chondrolabral junction.