

Title: Comparison of patient outcomes following ankle fracture fixation with or without arthroscopy trend toward improved outcomes with the use of arthroscopy

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Purpose:

Rotational ankle fractures are among the most commonly treated orthopedic injuries, yet there is no consensus on the role of arthroscopy in the management of acute ankle fractures. The purpose of this study is to investigate the rate of chondral pathology and other intra-articular injuries in ankle fracture patients and compare the clinical and radiographic outcomes of the patients who underwent arthroscopy at the time of ankle fracture open reduction internal fixation (ORIF) with those patients who did not. Our hypothesis was that patients who underwent arthroscopy at the time of ankle fracture ORIF would have better patient reported outcomes scores compared to ORIF without arthroscopy.

Methods:

We recorded each patient's demographic data, injury characteristics, surgical details, and follow-up radiographs to determine the degree of osteoarthritis and to assess the final outcome of the fracture. We then contacted the study patients via an email or telephonic survey. We utilized the PROMIS Global Health Short Form and the two question PASS scale as our selected patient reported outcome scores.

Results:

Among patients who received ORIF with arthroscopy, there was a 47.9% rate of arthroscopic intervention beyond the standard debridement of synovitis and fracture hematoma. The mean PROMIS physical function score was higher in the ORIF plus arthroscopy group compared to the traditional ORIF group (p value 0.064). 78% of the traditional ORIF group is satisfied with the function of their ankle compared to 89% satisfaction in the ORIF plus arthroscopy group. Patients with Weber B fibula fractures or tibiotalar joint dislocations that underwent arthroscopy plus ORIF had a statistically significant higher PROMIS physical function score at final follow up (p value 0.01).

Conclusions:

We found that patients treated with ankle arthroscopy in addition to ORIF for a rotational ankle fracture had superior patient reported outcomes for all tested metrics and across all specific fracture mechanisms and characteristics. Ankle arthroscopy is a useful adjunct to traditional ORIF and can improve outcomes without a significant increase in operative time and no change in complication rate.