

Osteochondritis Dissecans Of The Humeral Capitellum In A Swimmer

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Introduction

Osteochondritis dissecans of the humeral capitellum is common in baseball pitchers; however, it is rare for a swimmer. We treated a case of osteochondritis dissecans of the humeral capitellum in a swimmer conservatively.

Case

A 14-year-old man had been recognising a slight pain in the right elbow while swimming. His best style is breast stroke and trained to swim 4 to 5 kilometres per day, 6 days a week. He suddenly felt severe pain in his right elbow. Radiograph revealed osteochondritis dissecans of the humeral capitellum. The elbow flexion was limited in 90 degrees and CT showed bone defect in the capitellum and two small free bodies (stage IV) in the coronoid fossa and humeroulnar joint. Because stage IV was the worst, surgery was the choice of treatment. However, as the free fragments were stable, conservative treatment was conducted. The patient was advised to rest his elbow and allowed to train only his lower extremities and trunk for three months. X-ray and sonography were examined every month and neither the two free fragments moved nor the capitellum got worse. Since the pain and range of motion also became better, swimming practice using upper extremities was started three months after the first visit.

Results

Now a year after the first visit, the elbow flexion recovered to 140 degrees and both of bone defects and free bodies remain no changes. The patient feels no pain even in swimming.

Conclusion

A rare case of osteochondritis dissecans of the humeral capitellum in a swimmer was treated conservatively and good results were obtained. Because the current case still has free bodies in the elbow, further follow-up is necessary. However, conservative treatment might be the choice of treatment even for stage IV of osteochondritis dissecans of the humeral capitellum.