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**Original Research Article**

# A Prospective study of using a locking compression plate as external fixator for compound fracture of tibia

**Dr. Deepesh Saxena[1] (PG Student 3rd Year), Dr. Rajveer Singh Bajoria[2] (Professor), Dr. Manish Bairagi[3] (Assoc. Prof.) & Dr. Balram Kalme[4] (PG Student 2nd Year)**

Dept. of Orthopaedics, GRMC, Gwalior, M.P.[1,2,3&4]

Corresponding Author: Dr. Balram Kalme

**Abstract:**

**Background:** Most of lower leg external fixation are bulky and cumbersome and provides only temporary bony stabilization. Anatomically pre-contoured supracutaneous LCP has been utilized by many authors as an external fixator in patients with compound fractures of lower limb.

**Aim:** The aim of this study is to analyse the end result of Supracutaneous LCP as a method of definitive external fixation and its effect on rate of union , average time taken for union,rate of infection, complications ,the need of secondary procedure.

**Methodology:** A complete of 25 patients of compound fractures of tibia underwent"supracutaneous plating" of the tibia using a LCP. Regular screw tract dressings were done. Average period of follow-up was 7 months

**Results:** The plate was kept ex situ for a period of 20-24 weeks. out of 25 patients 18 had union and 7 had non – union. maximam patients achieved union between 6-8 mnths. Mean time for union was 6.9 mnths .

**Conclusion:** In compound fractures of tibia supracutaneous LCP can be used as a definitive external fixator because it gives good results and fewer complication rates,with Adequate stability. Advantageous effect of LCP in facilitating wound healing, cosmetic surgery procedure. Because it does not strike the contralateral leg therefore cosmetically acceptable and functional while ambulation. it saves cost of secondary procedure as well.

**Keywords:** Supracutaneous LCP, compound tibial fractures, external fixation by plate.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The ultimate aim of management of open fractures is to stop bacterial proliferation in the wound and in the circulation, remove dead and nonviable tissues by extensive wound debridement, and ensure adequate coverage of exposed bone. The instability of the fracture after debridement will compromise eradication of infection and wound healing. Till date, temporary bony stabilization by external fixation is standard approach to achieve stable skeleton Fixation to allow fracture to heal. Thus the two stage treatement protocol is used initially using external fixator as primary fixation and later using either plate on nail as a definitive fixation.(1,2)

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The most common technique of skeletal stabilization in open fractures is the use of universal or tubular external fixator. Most of the external fixator frames used in management of fractures of tibia , femur are large and bulky which hinders the movement of both the legs during the gait cycle. They cannot be hidden under clothes and are not cosmetically well looking. Thus, these devices demand more compliance from the patient.
The application of LCP as an external fixator is described as "supracutaneous plating technique."

## 2. MATERIAL & METHOD

An observational study of patients with compound injuries of tibia during a period of Nov 2020 to March 2023. Total 25 fractures were treated by Supracutaneous locking compression plate application. Their mean age was 35 years. (19-62yrs).
To assess the functional outcome of Compound of Tibial fractures treated with Supracutaneous LCP, to asses rate of union, average time taken for union, to check the complications of Compound fractures and need of any secondary procedures. Inclusion criterion are all fresh cases of open fracture of tibia from Gustilo Anderson type II to type IIIB metaphysio-diaphyseal Fractures, age more than 18 yrs, compound extra-articular fracture. Exclusion criterion are pathological fractures, patients with neurological and vascular deficit and open fracture without adequate soft tissue coverage,Age less than 18 yrs, refusal to give consent to be included in study.

**Operative procedure**
**Anaesthesia:**
Spinal anaesthesia is used, the involved limb is prepared and draped with standard aseptic precaution.
**Technique:**
As per the grade of compound fracture, pre antibiotic were administered and intervention is carried out without tourniquet so as to allow adequate antibiotic perfusion.
▪ Thorough debridement and wound wash is given and fracture alignment achieved before wound closure.
▪ Locking compression plate of appropriate length is chosen in line with the position of fracture.
▪ It is preferred to use at least 3 to 4 screws in both the proximal and distal fragments of the fracture.
▪ Plate is initially fixed to proximal and distal fragments with the assistance of k wire after fracture reduction under fluoroscopy guidance.
▪ LCP is placed at such distance from underlying skin such providing adequate space for swelling and wound care (dressing) and adequate mechanical stabilization.
▪ Usually a custom made spacer helps to keep equal distance of plates.
▪ Bi cortical screw fixation is completed with locking screw and plate fixed.
▪ After achieving satisfactory reduction subsequent holes are drilled through stab incisions using drill sleeves. It is preferable to put screws first in distal fragment followed by proximal fragment. The size, position and orientation of screws are confirmed under fluoroscopy.
▪ For comminuted tibial fractures, reduction of length and alignment were achieved by traction and percutaneous manipulation with k wires under fluoroscopy guidance.
▪ For the distal tibia, a minimum of four screws (4.5 mm) proximally and three to four screws (3.5 mm) distally is suggested. Stab incision were made on intact soft tissues and

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locking drill guides were placed. Successive holes were drilled over locking drill-guides. Screws were placed first in distal fragment and then in proximal fragment after ensuring adequate reduction.

## 3. RESULTS

- We prospectively evaluated 25 cases of fresh compound tibial fractures. The mean duration of surgery was 45 minutes range (30 minutes to 60 minutes).
- Out of 25 patients 18 had union and 6 had non – union and 1 has infected non -union. maximam patients achieved union between 6-8 mnths. Mean time for union was 6.9 mnths.
- Average age was found to be 36.44 years with a range of 18 to 55 years.
- Once biplaner radiographic cortical bridging was observed, full weight bearing for 1 month before implant removal was advised.
- 1 patient needed flap coverage,1 patient undergo skin grafting,1 patient needed bone grafting, 5 patient undergoes plating.
- Bony results as per ASAMI SCORE - excellent in 60% , good in 8% , fair in 4% and poor in 24%.
- Functional results as per ASAMI SCORE- excellent in 52% , good in 32% , fair in 4% and poor in 24%.

| Bony results | Criteria | Number of Patients (LCP) |
|---|---|---|
| **Excellent** | **Union, no infection, deformity <7$^{o}$, LLD <2.5cm** | **15** |
| **Good** | **Union+ any of the two following: no infection, deformity <7$^{o}$, LLD <2.5cm** | **02** |
| **Fair** | **Union + any of the following- no infection, deformity <7$^{o}$, LLD <2.5cm** | **01** |
| **Poor** | **Non union/ refracture/union+ infection+ deformity >7$^{o}$ + LLD>2.5cm** | **07** |

| Functional results | Criteria | Number of Patients (LCP) |
|---|---|---|
| **Excellent** | **All ADL, no limp, minimum stiffness (loss of 15o knee extension/ <15o DF of ankle/ insignificant pain)** | **13** |

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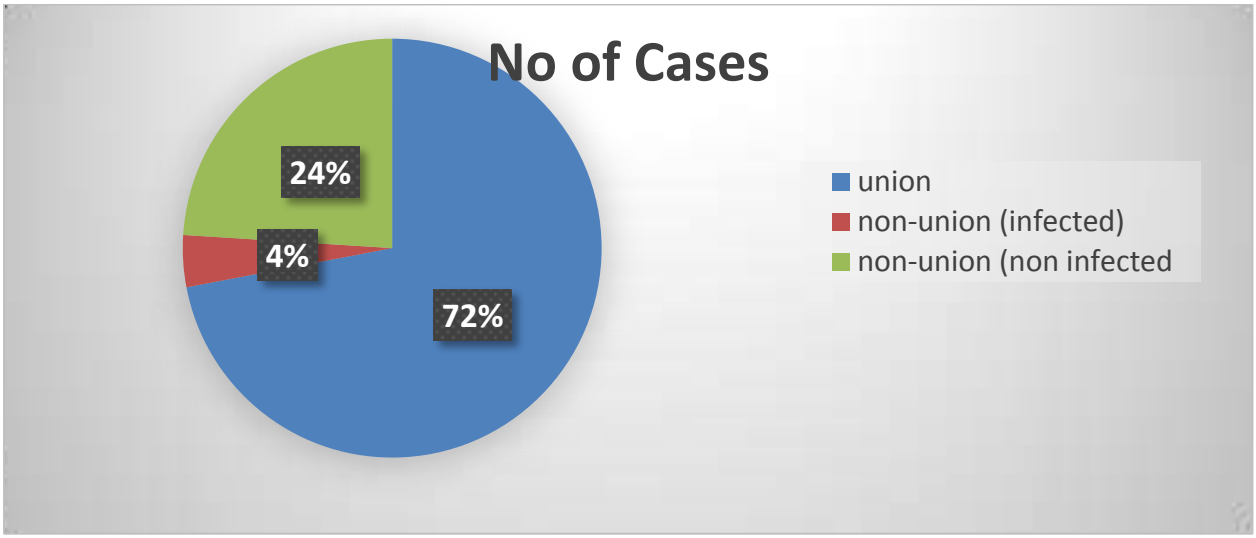
| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Good** | **Almost ADL, one/ two of the following: limp, stiffness, pain.** | **08** |
| **FAIR** | **Most ADL, three or all of the following: limp, stiffness, significant pain.** | **01** |
| **Poor** | **Limited ADL** | **03** |




## 4. DISCUSSION

In Contrast with traditional external fixators, which are often heavy, locking plates have a low profile and thus are less likely to strike the contralateral lower leg in the swing through phase of either leg during ambulation [9-12]. Under stockings the plate may be well concealed because it is placed close to the skin, enabling patients to steer while wearing trousers. The anteromedial aspect of the tibia are often clearly palpated, facilitating fast and accurate insertion of screws with less risk of neurovascular injuries. Bicortical screws were utilized in this study. All of those features increase the steadiness of the construct [13]. All of the patients eventually achieved fracture healing. Conventional treatment for tibial fractures includes plating or nailing. Nevertheless, the submuscular or subcutaneous plates could also be prominent under the skin or muscles and may cause soft tissue problems [14]. Additionally, anterior knee pain is often reported after antegrade tibial nailing. One stage supracutaneous LCP fixation decreases both costs and surgical injuries [15]. Fractures are anatomically reduced via a little incision without massive dissection. The LCP and screws were placed medially have less influence on muscle activity. Because stab incisions were used for screw insertion, and thus digging and tunnelling round the bone wasn't necessary, the possibility of infection might be decreased. With external plating, the chances of deep infection are reduced due to maintenance of the integrity of the soft tissue envelope. In contrast, surgery to withdraw an intramedullary nail or insitu locking plate fixation can lead to complications.

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## 5. CONCLUSION

Locking compression plate can be used as a definitive external fixator for compound tibial fractures as it gives good results and low complication rates, with satisfactory stability . It also has the advantage of facilitating wound healing, plastic procedures. It is also cosmetically acceptable and non-cumbersome while mobilization as it does not strike the opposite leg. It allows easy assessment of fracture healing on x rays due to nonoverlapping of the implant. The use of LCPs as external fixators is not popular and there is little evidence in the literature [16] but it has the advantage of less financial burden to rural and poor people with better embracing as early mobilization of joints are allowed with lesser complication. Future prospects - Available literatures are studies on small sample size. Large studies are required for proving efficacy and understanding rare adverse effects.

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