

Recent Advance in Treatment for Elderly Wrist Fracture

Wrist (distal radial) fractures account for 14% of all extremity injuries and can occur as a result of a fall commonly seen in osteoporotic elderly patients. In the past, elderly wrist fractures were often treated with manipulation and casting, despite the fact that most cases would heal with significant shortening and malalignment.

With the introduction of new locking screws and fixed-angle metal implants, a good alignment can often be achieved and maintained by a fixed-angle plate placed in the palmar side of the wrist. A palmer fixed-angle plating restores stability in terms of load transmission comparable to that of intact radius. The surgical technique with new screws and implants is easier than the conventional methods and is associated with less soft tissue irritation. It also permits early wrist rehabilitation without the need of additional splintage.

The Queen Mary Hospital of the University of Hong Kong (HKU) is the first centre to introduce the new fixed-angle metal implants to treat elderly fractures in Asia since 4 years ago, to date, about 50 elderly patients have received the new fixation method. Among those patients, the oldest one aged 89. In comparison with plaster treatment, there are significantly less shortening of the radius and less abnormal tilting of the wrist, and the new implants enable faster recovery from few months to around 3 weeks.