Aseptic osteonecrosis of the lunatum (Kienbock disease) and handicap in a case report

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Introduction.– Idiopathic avascular necrosis of the lunatum is a rare pathology whose pathogenesis is multifactorial with a genetic involvement, anatomical, mechanical and also metabolic. It causes functional impairment and a handicap of the hands and is complicated by carpal tunnel syndrome and arthritis of wrist.

Observation.– A 53-year-old woman, right-handed, a housewife, followed for an insulin-recurring balanced for 20 years. She then reported 12 months of the right wrist joint pain, tingling in both hands and functional impairment in activities of daily living.

On physical examination, there was pain on palpation of the lunatum, a limited wrist flexion/extension, motor and sensory deficits in the territory of the median nerve with positive provocation tests (Tinel, Phalen).

Plain radiographs of the right wrist shows necrosis of the lunatum stage IV with collapse and signs of arthritis of the wrist. The scanner of the wrist confirms diagnostic. The electromyography found a bilateral carpal tunnel syndrome greater on the right.

Neurolysis of the median nerve and wrist immobilization orthotic for 4 weeks followed by reeducation and an analgesic therapy was allowed improvement of symptoms and functional impairment.

Discussion.– Kienbock’s disease, has been known since 1843. The relative rarity of this pathology, the absence of internationally agreed upon classification and the many therapeutic methods, make it difficult to care for this disease. It often involves a young adult who has wrist pain associated or not with a limited range of motion of the wrist and above the loss of clamping force with pain around the lunatum. Plain radiographs of the wrist may be normal at the beginning stage. In cases of diagnostic doubt, we must practice an MRI or scanner.

The choice of the functional treatment or surgery depends on several factors including the patient’s age and his profession, the side attained, the stage of disease, the existence of unequal length of the two bones in the arm or wrist arthritis.

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