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Mid-term outcomes of combined anterior latissimus dorsi and teres major tendon transfer for irreparable anterosuperior rotator cuff tears: A MINIMUM FIVE-YEAR FOLLOW-UP STUDY

Dindukurti Aravind Naga Shanmuga Sai¹, Chaemoon Lim¹, Jung Gon Kim¹, Bo taek Kim¹, Chang Hee Baek¹
Department of Orthopaedic Surgery, Yeosu Baek Hospital, Korea, Republic of¹

Introduction and Background

Combined anterior latissimus dorsi and teres major tendon transfer has been introduced as a joint-preserving surgical option for patients with an irreparable anterosuperior rotator cuff tear involving both the subscapularis and supraspinatus tendons. The aim of this study was to assess the mid-term clinical and radiological outcomes of the procedure in patients with an irreparable rotator cuff tear. The short-term outcomes at a mean follow-up of 38.1 months (24 to 63) in some of these patients have previously been reported.

Material and Method

A retrospective review was performed on patients with irreparable anterior rotator cuff tears who underwent a combined latissimus dorsi and pectoralis major tendon transfer between April 2015 and January 2019. Inclusion criteria involved patients with irreparable subscapularis and supraspinatus tears (Goutallier grade ≥ 3) without advanced osteoarthritis. A total of 31 patients, with a mean age of 66.1 years (57 to 81), were followed up for a minimum of five years. Clinical evaluation included patient reported outcome measure (PROM), range of motion (ROM) and progression of arthritis.

Results

At a mean follow-up of 74.7 months (66 to 92), significant improvements were noted in clinical scores, ROM (mean increase from 3.9 to 6.3; $p < 0.001$), and strength of internal rotation ($p < 0.001$), whereas the external rotation remained unchanged. There was no significant progression in arthritis, and in 15 patients with anterior subluxation preoperatively, this resolved unremarkably postoperatively. Re-tears occurred in four patients (12.9%). One patient required conversion to reverse shoulder arthroplasty, 6.2 years postoperatively.

Conclusions

A combined latissimus dorsi and teres major tendon transfer yielded favorable clinical outcomes at a mid-term follow-up of nearly six years in patients with an irreparable anterosuperior rotator cuff tear. These findings support its role as a reliable joint preserving surgical option, particularly for relatively young and active patients.

