

A BLIZZARD IN THE KNEE - GOUT CLOUDS THE WAY TO THE OPERATING TABLE

Vikneswaran Govindasamy¹, Angelyn Wong CC¹, Kugan Ramachandran¹, Putra Vatakal, Basir Towil¹

¹Hospital Sungai Buloh

Introduction: Monosodium Urate (MSU) crystals deposited within the knee joint are known to affect chondrocytes within the cartilage and cause severe knee osteoarthritis. We discuss a case of a young man with a prior history of a left knee sporting injury who presented with multiple episodes of locking of the same knee to illustrate how MSU crystals within the knee can present with locked knee mimicking a mechanical block by a torn meniscus or chondral fragment.

Discussion: A 34 year old Malay man presented to our clinic with a six month history of left knee pain and several episodes of being unable to fully straighten his knee that resolved spontaneously. Examination of left knee revealed active and passive extension less than 10 degrees, medial joint line tenderness, positive McMurray test. Flexion beyond 100 degrees was painful, mild joint effusion, but no significant swelling. Cruciate and collateral ligaments were intact. Plain radiograph was normal. A diagnostic arthroscopy showed no meniscal tears and intact cruciate ligaments. White chalky material was found to be coating more than 95% of the surfaces of the medial and lateral menisci surface and the particles were seen suspended in synovial fluid giving the knee joint the appearance of a well shaken Christmas snow globe. We debrided the intra-articular tophi, washed out free floating material and infiltrated the joint with Platelet Rich Growth Factor (Endoret) which is not contraindicated in gouty arthritis. The histopathologist confirmed the intraoperative specimens to be consistent with gouty tophi.

Conclusion: Knee pathology caused by intra-articular gouty tophi can pose a diagnostic challenge as it can mimic meniscal pathology or ligamentous instability. MRI can aid diagnosis but arthroscopy remains the diagnostic gold standard. Once diagnosed, pharmacological treatment is essential to prevent recurrence. We advocate keeping a snow globe on your desk to be mindful of gout when dealing with unusual knee cases.