

RARE CASE OF NEGLECTED LEFT ELBOW DISLOCATION COMPLICATED WITH COMPARTMENT SYNDROME SECONDARY TO TRADITIONAL MASSAGE AND COAGULOPATHY : A CASE REPORT

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Introduction: Simple elbow dislocations do not usually represent benign injuries. Anakwe showed in a retrospective trial in which 180 patients who presented with elbow dislocations caused considerable residual pain and stiffness in 62% and 56% of the patients, respectively. The increasing popularity and use of traditional and complementary medicine in both developed and developing countries, including Malaysia, have raised significant public healthy policy issues. Complications of traditional massage treatment were reported however acute compartment syndrome is relatively rare.

Discussion: A 39-year-old female with underlying congenital heart disease with chronic atrial fibrillation on Tab Warfarin presented with 3-day-history of alleged fall with an outstretched left hand and subsequently sustained pain and swelling over left elbow. Patient seek traditional massages prior to presentation with a pain score of 10/10. Clinical examination revealed tense left hand up to elbow region with positive passive stretch test, paraesthesia over left hand with multiple blisters formation. X-ray left elbow showed posterior left elbow dislocation with extensive soft tissue opacity seen. Blood investigation showed severe coagulopathy with INR 9.96. Patient was stabilized by multidisiplinary team to optimize patient for limb salvaging surgery. Emergency CMR+cross left elbow external fixation+wound debridement+deroofting+fasciotomy over left upper limb was done. After 3 months of physiotherapy, she regained satisfactory 10-90 degree range of motion over left elbow with well healed wound.

Conclusion: Elbow joint is an complex joint and sufficient stability is essential to elbow functionality which is provided by soft tissue structures as well as bony structures. In remote areas due to poor access to proper medical facilities and due to lack of awareness, old unreduced elbow dislocations are common. Such patients are often neglected and maltreated before being seen by specialist. Acute compartment syndrome is rarely associated with pure dislocation of the elbow. It is also vital to note that presentations of compartment syndrome are not always acute, but may be sub-acute and at times chronic.