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Chronic post-rheumatic fever (Jaccoud's) arthropathy involving carpometacarpal joints

Jaccoud's arthropathy, although rare, is well known to cardiologists as a cause of correctable deformities of the hands and feet, particularly of the metacarpophalangeal and metatarsophalangeal joints, in chronic rheumatic heart disease patients.

A 30-year-old man presented with history of migratory polyarthritides 12 years previously, with deformities of the hands and feet for the last 10 years, and a three year history of exertional palpitation and dyspnoea. Physical examination revealed peripheral signs of aortic run off, with hyperdynamic left ventricle and chronic severe aortic regurgitation. Examination of major joints did not reveal any sign of acute rheumatic activity. However, gross deformities were evident in the hands, in the form of posterior subluxation of the first carpometacarpal joints and ulnar deviation of the middle finger at the distal interphalangeal joints, bilaterally, which were completely correctable. The feet also had deformities, in the form of lateral deviation of the metatarsophalangeal joints, which were partially correctable. There were no features suggestive of Marfan's syndrome or other heritable connective tissue disorders. Laboratory investigations were negative for acute phase reactants, anti-streptolysin-O titre, rheumatoid factor and antinuclear factor. Chest x ray, ECG and two-dimensional echocardiography and Doppler study were consistent with chronic severe aortic regurgitation and moderate mitral regurgitation, with mitral valve thickening and doming. Radiographs of both hands showed posterior subluxation of the carpometacarpal joints, which were completely correctable (panels A, B). Radiography of the feet revealed lateral deviation at the metatarsophalangeal joints. Although there are a few reports of involvement of the metacarpophalangeal, metatarsophalangeal and interphalangeal joints, involvement of the carpometacarpal joint has not been previously reported in the English literature.

G Goyal
R Thakur
S Singh

gajindergoyal@yahoo.co.in

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