

Surgical Treatment of Peroneus Brevis Tendon Repair With and Without Human Amniotic Allograft: A Comparison Study

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INTRODUCTION

Peroneus brevis tendon tears often present as lateral ankle pain and instability caused by mechanical or anatomic factors. Since first reported by Myers in 1924, its incidence today is not always appreciated. Longitudinal peroneus brevis tears have been reported to be between 11 and 37% with significant lateral ankle injuries (1-4). Tears of the peroneus brevis tendon are frequently overlooked leading to misdiagnosis and mistreatment. Dombek et al found that only 60% of peroneal tendon disorders were accurately diagnosed at first visit (5). Tears and ruptures are commonly associated with other disorders including chronic ankle instability, inversion ankle sprains, tenosynovitis, and ankle fractures (6,7).

Proper treatment of these injuries requires an understanding of potential anatomic abnormalities that may contribute to this pathology. The anatomic position of the peroneus brevis tendon predisposes the tendon to shear stress due to its location between the distal fibula and the peroneus longus tendon (8). A convex or flat retro-malleolar groove, low lying muscle belly, peroneus quartus, rearfoot varus, supinated subtalar joint secondary to a forefoot valgus, procurvatum ankle, posterior lateral fibular spurring, and superior peroneal retinaculum incompetence are additional anatomic abnormalities that can contribute to weakening of the peroneus brevis tendon (2,5,9-12).

Surgical treatment options for peroneus brevis tendon tears may include one or more of the following: primary repair of the tendon, debridement, excision of tendon with tubularization, tenodesis, tendon transfer, lateral ankle ligament reconstruction, repair using allograft, peroneal sulcus deepening, or superior peroneal retinaculum repair (2,6,13-17). More than one procedure is often performed to sufficiently address the tear and its concurrent anatomic abnormalities as mentioned above.

Human amniotic allograft (HAA) is a commercially available product that is composed of human amniotic membrane. Although the use of HAA in peroneal tendon

repair has been minimally reported in the literature, it is well documented in its use for many other clinical procedures. Over the past 100 years, HAA has been used in chronic wounds, burns, tendon repair, nerve repair, corneal repair, intra-oral reconstruction, hip arthroplasty, microvascular grafts, genital reconstruction, peritoneal reconstruction, dural defects, skin reconstruction, intra-abdominal adhesions, talar dome lesions, calcaneal osteotomies, and reconstruction of nasal lining and tympanic membranes (18-24). Several studies have shown that HAA contains an array of growth factors, cytokines and proteins that contribute to its analgesic, anti-microbial, and anti-inflammatory properties (18-20,25-27). The primary glycosaminoglycan present in amniotic allograft is high molecular weight hyaluronic acid, which has been shown to decrease adhesions and fibrosis; therefore, helping with the reduction of scars (18-20,23,25-28-30, 31).

HAA allograft is immunologically inert, eliminating the risk for host rejection. Each tissue specimen undergoes a thorough screening process for relevant communicable diseases and is sterilized (32). The pluripotent property of the cells found in HAA allows for potential regeneration into different tissue types such as cartilage, bone, muscle, or tendon (19,21,27). All of these qualities of HAA have made it a suitable product for a variety of foot and ankle pathologies.

There are currently no outcome studies on surgical treatment recommendations for peroneus brevis tendon tears. Publications on the use of allograft in the treatment of peroneal tendon tears are also sparse and limited to a few published case reports. The purpose of this study is to report comparative outcomes of peroneus brevis tendon tear repairs using HAA versus a control group without HAA and to present any significant differences found. The authors hypothesize that the analgesic, anti-microbial, anti-inflammatory and adhesion reducing properties of HAA will result in functional preservation, reduced rehabilitation time, reduced postoperative pain, minimal complications, and increased patient satisfaction as opposed to the control group.

PATIENTS AND METHODS

A total of 368 ankle arthroscopy cases that underwent the Triad procedure were reviewed from January 2006 to May 2013. Each patient was treated operatively by a single surgeon (JJA). All patients with talar osteochondral defects, peroneus longus pathology, previous ankle surgery, diabetes mellitus, body mass index over 30.1, subtalar joint pathology and inadequate follow-up were excluded. The final patient cohort consisted of 129 consecutive Triad cases, 58 with HAA used at the peroneus brevis repair site and 71 without (control). All patients had history of injury to the ankle, with continued pain, instability, and inability to perform regular activity including exercise and sports. All patients failed conservative care that included bracing, a minimum of 4 weeks of physical therapy, nonsteroidal antiinflammatory drugs, rest, and immobilization. Patients received physical therapy preoperatively and postoperatively. The operative procedure included the Triad surgical procedure, which consists of ankle joint arthroscopy, lateral ankle ligament reconstruction and peroneal retinacular tightening, and peroneus brevis tendon repair using tubularization, and excision of low lying muscle belly (33).

The HAA was then wrapped around the peroneus brevis repair site prior to repair of the peroneal retinaculum in the HAA group. Primary outcomes were patient satisfaction using a preoperative and postoperative visual analog scale (VAS), and modified American College of Foot and Ankle Surgeons (ACFAS) hind foot ankle score system. The ACFAS score was modified for radiographic findings, which were converted to neutral points preoperatively and postoperatively since there were not radiographic changes. The modified ACFAS score was measured preoperatively as well as at 3, 12, and 24 months postoperatively. A paired *t*-test was used to determine statistically significant findings between the preoperative and postoperative scores.

Surgical Technique

A standard anterior, lateral, and medial ankle scope portal approach was used. Any superficial chondritis, anterior lipping, or anterior pinch lesions were addressed. An 8-cm curvilinear incision was made over the lateral portion of the ankle beginning 5 cm posterior to the lateral malleolus and curving distally anterolateral to incorporate the lateral portal and then posteriorly below the tip of the fibula for the lateral ligament exposure (Figure 1). The incision was deepened through the soft tissue down to the level of the peroneal tendons. The peroneal retinaculum was reflected proximally to allow reattachment to the periosteum on the fibula. No anchors were used. Any presence of a low-lying peroneus brevis muscle belly, accessory tendon, and/or synovitis, and redundant retinaculum were excised. The

longitudinal tears were repaired with direct tubularization of the brevis (Figures 2, 3).

When used, HAA (NuShield protective patch, NuTech Medical) was wrapped around the brevis, but not sutured. The peroneal retinaculum was reapproximated and tightened. The peroneal tendons were then returned to their retrofibular groove (Figures 4, 5). Lastly, the anterior talofibular ligament and calcaneofibular ligament were imbricated, repaired, and reinforced with the lateral slip of the extensor retinaculum. The skin was closed in a standard fashion with vicryl and nylon suture. An identical procedure was performed in the control group without the addition of HAA.



Figure 1. Curvilinear incision placement on the lateral ankle.



Figure 2. Peroneus brevis tendon tear prior to repair.



Figure 3. Peroneus brevis tendon after repair with direct tubularization.



Figure 4. Peroneus brevis tendon with human amniotic membrane allograft.

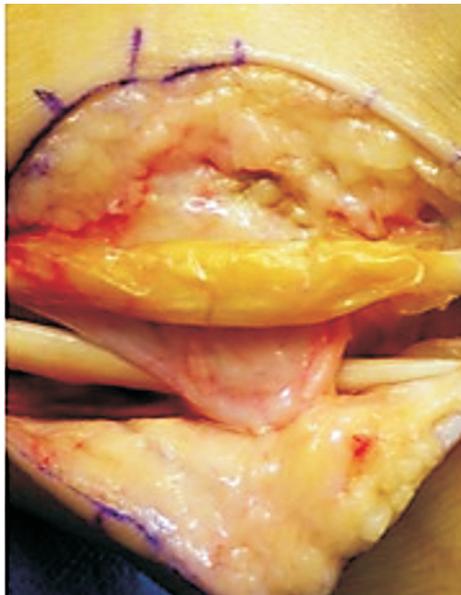


Figure 5. Human amniotic membrane allograft wrapped around the repaired peroneus brevis tendon.

RESULTS

The average ages of the HAA group and control group were 38.36 and 39.24 years, respectively. In both groups, patients had comorbidities of hyperthyroidism, thyroid disease, hypertension, diabetes mellitus, and obesity. One patient had coronary heart disease in the control group (Table 1). Preoperative and postoperative VAS scores were 6.0 and 1.2, respectively in the HAA group while the control group had scores of 6.0 and 1.6. When head to head comparisons were made, the differences seen between HAA and control group was significant ($P = 0.012$). ACFAS scores (Table 2) were also found to be significant within the individual groups, but no significance was found when HAA and control groups were measured against each other. The HAA group had a mean postoperative physical therapy time of 5.21 weeks while control group subjects exhibited a mean physical therapy time of 7.01 weeks, also a significant difference ($P = 0.0002$). Postoperative complications (4.65%) included 1 patient who developed complex regional pain syndrome and another who experienced nerve entrapment in the HAA group while 2 subjects developed nerve entrapments in the control groups (Table 1).

DISCUSSION

The results of the present study have demonstrated promising outcomes for the use of HAA in adjunct to the Triad procedure to repair peroneus brevis tendon tears. With a significant reduction in postoperative pain and reduced physical therapy time, minimal complications, and zero postoperative infections, the results are consistent with prior

Table 1. Patient demographics.

DEMOGRAPHICS	Age: Average	Age: Range	Sex	Comorbidities	Complications
Procedure with Human Amniotic Allograft	38.36	18-70	F=22 M=36	15 Patients 9 Hyperthyroidism 3 Thyroid Disease 2 Obese 1 Diabetes Mellitis	2 Patients 1 CRPS 1 Nerve Entrapment
Procedure without Human Amniotic Allograft	39.24	18-68	F=22 M=49	20 Patients 12 Hyperthyroidism 3 Thyroid Disease 3 Obese 1 Diabetes Mellitis 1 Coronary Artery Disease	4 Patients 2 Nerve Entrapment 2 Scar Tissue

Table 2. Modified American College of Foot and Ankle Surgery (ACFAS) and visual analog scores (VAS).

ACFAS AND VAS SCORES	Modified ACFAS Scores				VAS Scores		Physical Therapy	
	Pre-Op	3 Month Post-Op	12 month Post-Op	24 month Post-Op	Pre-Op	Post-Op	Pre-Op	Post-Op
Procedure with Human Amniotic Allograft	72.69	89.42	91.46	91.31	6.09	1.25	6.24	5.25
Procedure without Human Amniotic Allograft	72.08	87.5	90.08	89.23	6.12	1.81	6.09	7.35
					p=0.8991	p=0.0002	p=0.7584	p<.0001

publications showing that the use of HAA in foot and ankle procedures is safe. Since its first use in skin transplantation in the early 1900s, there have been several studies showing its utility and safety in foot and ankle surgeries (18,19,21-27). Demill et al published a retrospective study reporting the short-term outcomes of cryopreserved amniotic membrane and umbilical cord tissue in foot and ankle surgery. The authors reported 20 different surgical procedures that involved the use of amniotic allograft, with the most common procedure performed being Achilles and peroneal tendon repair (18). Of the 129 patients, the overall wound complication rate was 4.65% with only 2.3% having continued pain at surgical site. The authors found that the complication rate was much lower than what was historically noted (18).

Anderson et al found that using HAA in addition to microfracture for treatment of talar dome lesions also helped decrease postoperative pain. In their retrospective study, 37 patients with osteochondral lesions measuring 2 cm² or less were treated with microfracture and HAA. VAS scores and modified AFCAS ankle scores were recorded preoperatively and postoperatively and the authors reported a statistically significant improvement in these scores with no

identified complications (21). Another study by Anderson et al reported the safety of HAA in calcaneal osteotomies, which included 63 patients undergoing an Evans calcaneal osteotomy with implantation of tri-cortical iliac crest bone graft. The authors retrospectively reviewed all 63 patients with a 2-year follow up and found that the use of HAA did not alter the time to union or return to normal shoe gear for this procedure. There were no documented wound dehiscence, nonunion, infection, or immune reactions reported (24). Warner et al examined the safety and efficacy of cryopreserved amniotic membrane and umbilical cord in 14 patients undergoing complex reconstructive and/or revision foot and ankle procedures. While the study sample was small, the outcomes showed no complications directly related to the use of the allograft, as well as a statistically significant improvement in pain and function via the ACFAS score (29).

The results of this study have also have shown that the use of HAA significantly improved pain as demonstrated by the VAS scores and physical therapy time. Within the individual groups, significant ACFAS scores substantiate the efficacy of the Triad procedure in affecting patient outcomes. However, the authors could not conclude a

significant difference between the treatment and control group. Postoperative adhesions in tendon surgery are of concern to any foot and ankle surgeon due to range of motion limitations, which may alter the rehabilitation period and lead to continued pain and immobility. The authors feel that wrapping the tendon in HAA made a meaningful contribution to help decrease those kinds of complications due to the fact that subjects in this study who had HAA applied showed significantly improved VAS scores and physical therapy time as opposed to the control group. The clinical use of HAA is steadily increasing in foot and ankle surgeries and additional larger, prospective studies will be useful in confirming its niche in the field.

In conclusion, the present study has added to the growing body of research demonstrating the utility and safety of HAA in foot and ankle surgery, specifically peroneal tendon repair. With its antimicrobial, antiinflammatory, and antifibrotic properties, HAA affords numerous benefits to peroneal tendon repairs including pain reduction, shorter physical therapy utilization, and minimal complications. HAA can prove to be an effective, cost-sensitive adjunct in surgical repair of peroneal tendon repairs.

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