

# World Journal of *Clinical Cases*

*World J Clin Cases* 2022 May 16; 10(14): 4327-4712



## Contents

Thrice Monthly Volume 10 Number 14 May 16, 2022

## OPINION REVIEW

- 4327 Emerging role of biosimilars in the clinical care of inflammatory bowel disease patients  
*Najeeb H, Yasmin F, Surani S*

## MINIREVIEWS

- 4334 Practical insights into chronic management of hepatic Wilson's disease  
*Lynch EN, Campani C, Innocenti T, Dragoni G, Forte P, Galli A*
- 4348 Adipose-derived stem cells in the treatment of hepatobiliary diseases and sepsis  
*Satilmis B, Cicek GS, Cicek E, Akbulut S, Sahin TT, Yilmaz S*

## ORIGINAL ARTICLE

## Clinical and Translational Research

- 4357 Learning curve for a surgeon in robotic pancreaticoduodenectomy through a "G"-shaped approach: A cumulative sum analysis  
*Wei ZG, Liang CJ, Du Y, Zhang YP, Liu Y*
- 4368 Clinical and prognostic significance of expression of phosphoglycerate mutase family member 5 and Parkin in advanced colorectal cancer  
*Wu C, Feng ML, Jiao TW, Sun MJ*

## Case Control Study

- 4380 Significance of preoperative peripheral blood neutrophil-lymphocyte ratio in predicting postoperative survival in patients with multiple myeloma bone disease  
*Xu ZY, Yao XC, Shi XJ, Du XR*

## Retrospective Study

- 4395 Association between depression and malnutrition in pulmonary tuberculosis patients: A cross-sectional study  
*Fang XE, Chen DP, Tang LL, Mao YJ*
- 4404 Pancreatic cancer incidence and mortality patterns in 2006-2015 and prediction of the epidemiological trend to 2025 in China  
*Yin MY, Xi LT, Liu L, Zhu JZ, Qian LJ, Xu CF*
- 4414 Evaluation of short- and medium-term efficacy and complications of ultrasound-guided ablation for small liver cancer  
*Zhong H, Hu R, Jiang YS*

- 4425** Hematopoiesis reconstitution and anti-tumor effectiveness of Pai-Neng-Da capsule in acute leukemia patients with haploidentical hematopoietic stem cell transplantation

*Yuan JJ, Lu Y, Cao JJ, Pei RZ, Gao RL*

- 4436** Oral and maxillofacial pain as the first sign of metastasis of an occult primary tumour: A fifteen-year retrospective study

*Shan S, Liu S, Yang ZY, Wang TM, Lin ZT, Feng YL, Pakezhati S, Huang XF, Zhang L, Sun GW*

- 4446** Reduced serum high-density lipoprotein cholesterol levels and aberrantly expressed cholesterol metabolism genes in colorectal cancer

*Tao JH, Wang XT, Yuan W, Chen JN, Wang ZJ, Ma YB, Zhao FQ, Zhang LY, Ma J, Liu Q*

### Observational Study

- 4460** Correlation of pressure gradient in three hepatic veins with portal pressure gradient

*Wang HY, Song QK, Yue ZD, Wang L, Fan ZH, Wu YF, Dong CB, Zhang Y, Meng MM, Zhang K, Jiang L, Ding HG, Zhang YN, Yang YP, Liu FQ*

- 4470** Multi-slice spiral computed tomography in diagnosing unstable pelvic fractures in elderly and effect of less invasive stabilization

*Huang JG, Zhang ZY, Li L, Liu GB, Li X*

### SYSTEMATIC REVIEWS

- 4480** Distribution and changes in hepatitis C virus genotype in China from 2010 to 2020

*Yang J, Liu HX, Su YY, Liang ZS, Rao HY*

### CASE REPORT

- 4494** Bow hunter's syndrome successfully treated with a posterior surgical decompression approach: A case report and review of literature

*Orlandi N, Cavallieri F, Grisendi I, Romano A, Ghadirpour R, Napoli M, Moratti C, Zanichelli M, Pascarella R, Valzania F, Zedde M*

- 4502** Histological remission of eosinophilic esophagitis under asthma therapy with IL-5 receptor monoclonal antibody: A case report

*Huguenot M, Bruhm AC, Essig M*

- 4509** Cutaneous mucosa-associated lymphoid tissue lymphoma complicating Sjögren's syndrome: A case report and review of literature

*Liu Y, Zhu J, Huang YH, Zhang QR, Zhao LL, Yu RH*

- 4519** Plexiform neurofibroma of the cauda equina with follow-up of 10 years: A case report

*Chomanskis Z, Juskys R, Cepkus S, Dulko J, Hendrixson V, Ruksenas O, Rocka S*

- 4528** Mixed porokeratosis with a novel mevalonate kinase gene mutation: A case report

*Xu HJ, Wen GD*

- 4535** Isolated pancreatic injury caused by abdominal massage: A case report

*Sun BL, Zhang LL, Yu WM, Tuo HF*

- 4541** Bronchiolar adenoma with unusual presentation: Two case reports  
*Du Y, Wang ZY, Zheng Z, Li YX, Wang XY, Du R*
- 4550** Periodontal-orthodontic interdisciplinary management of a “periodontally hopeless” maxillary central incisor with severe mobility: A case report and review of literature  
*Jiang K, Jiang LS, Li HX, Lei L*
- 4563** Anesthesia management for cesarean section in a pregnant woman with odontogenic infection: A case report  
*Ren YL, Ma YS*
- 4569** Convulsive-like movements as the first symptom of basilar artery occlusive brainstem infarction: A case report  
*Wang TL, Wu G, Liu SZ*
- 4574** Globe luxation may prevent myopia in a child: A case report  
*Li Q, Xu YX*
- 4580** Computer tomography-guided negative pressure drainage treatment of intrathoracic esophagojejunal anastomotic leakage: A case report  
*Jiang ZY, Tao GQ, Zhu YF*
- 4586** Primary or metastatic lung cancer? Sebaceous carcinoma of the thigh: A case report  
*Wei XL, Liu Q, Zeng QL, Zhou H*
- 4594** Perianesthesia emergency repair of a cut endotracheal tube’s inflatable tube: A case report  
*Wang TT, Wang J, Sun TT, Hou YT, Lu Y, Chen SG*
- 4601** Diagnosis of cytomegalovirus encephalitis using metagenomic next-generation sequencing of blood and cerebrospinal fluid: A case report  
*Xu CQ, Chen XL, Zhang DS, Wang JW, Yuan H, Chen WF, Xia H, Zhang ZY, Peng FH*
- 4608** Primary sigmoid squamous cell carcinoma with liver metastasis: A case report  
*Li XY, Teng G, Zhao X, Zhu CM*
- 4617** Acute recurrent cerebral infarction caused by moyamoya disease complicated with adenomyosis: A case report  
*Zhang S, Zhao LM, Xue BQ, Liang H, Guo GC, Liu Y, Wu RY, Li CY*
- 4625** Serum-negative Sjogren's syndrome with minimal lesion nephropathy as the initial presentation: A case report  
*Li CY, Li YM, Tian M*
- 4632** Successful individualized endodontic treatment of severely curved root canals in a mandibular second molar: A case report  
*Xu LJ, Zhang JY, Huang ZH, Wang XZ*

- 4640** Successful treatment in one myelodysplastic syndrome patient with primary thrombocytopenia and secondary deep vein thrombosis: A case report  
*Liu WB, Ma JX, Tong HX*
- 4648** Diagnosis of an extremely rare case of malignant adenomyoepithelioma in pleomorphic adenoma: A case report  
*Zhang WT, Wang YB, Ang Y, Wang HZ, Li YX*
- 4654** Management about intravesical histological transformation of prostatic mucinous carcinoma after radical prostatectomy: A case report  
*Bai SJ, Ma L, Luo M, Xu H, Yang L*
- 4661** Hepatopulmonary metastases from papillary thyroid microcarcinoma: A case report  
*Yang CY, Chen XW, Tang D, Yang WJ, Mi XX, Shi JP, Du WD*
- 4669** PD-1 inhibitor in combination with fruquintinib therapy for initial unresectable colorectal cancer: A case report  
*Zhang HQ, Huang CZ, Wu JY, Wang ZL, Shao Y, Fu Z*
- 4676** Cutaneous metastasis from esophageal squamous cell carcinoma: A case report  
*Zhang RY, Zhu SJ, Xue P, He SQ*
- 4684** Rare pattern of Maisonneuve fracture: A case report  
*Zhao B, Li N, Cao HB, Wang GX, He JQ*
- 4691** Suprasellar cistern tuberculoma presenting as unilateral ocular motility disorder and ptosis: A case report  
*Zhao BB, Tian C, Fu LJ, Zhang XB*
- 4698** Development of plasma cell dyscrasias in a patient with chronic myeloid leukemia: A case report  
*Zhang N, Jiang TD, Yi SH*
- 4704** Ovarian growing teratoma syndrome with multiple metastases in the abdominal cavity and liver: A case report  
*Hu X, Jia Z, Zhou LX, Kakongoma N*

**LETTER TO THE EDITOR**

- 4709** Perfectionism and mental health problems: Limitations and directions for future research  
*Nazari N*

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**RESPONSIBLE EDITORS FOR THIS ISSUE**

Production Editor: Hua-Ge Yin, Production Department Director: Xu Guo, Editorial Office Director: Jin-Lei Wang.

**NAME OF JOURNAL**

*World Journal of Clinical Cases*

**ISSN**

ISSN 2307-8960 (online)

**LAUNCH DATE**

April 16, 2013

**FREQUENCY**

Thrice Monthly

**EDITORS-IN-CHIEF**

Bao-Gan Peng, Jerzy Tadeusz Chudek, George Kontogeorgos, Maurizio Serati, Ja Hyeon Ku

**EDITORIAL BOARD MEMBERS**

<https://www.wjgnet.com/2307-8960/editorialboard.htm>

**PUBLICATION DATE**

May 16, 2022

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**PUBLICATION ETHICS**

<https://www.wjgnet.com/bpg/GerInfo/288>

**PUBLICATION MISCONDUCT**

<https://www.wjgnet.com/bpg/gerinfo/208>

**ARTICLE PROCESSING CHARGE**

<https://www.wjgnet.com/bpg/gerinfo/242>

**STEPS FOR SUBMITTING MANUSCRIPTS**

<https://www.wjgnet.com/bpg/GerInfo/239>

**ONLINE SUBMISSION**

<https://www.f6publishing.com>

## Rare pattern of Maisonneuve fracture: A case report

Bin Zhao, Nan Li, Hong-Bin Cao, Gui-Xin Wang, Jin-Quan He

**Specialty type:** Medicine, research and experimental

**Provenance and peer review:** Unsolicited article; Externally peer reviewed.

**Peer-review model:** Single blind

**Peer-review report's scientific quality classification**

Grade A (Excellent): A  
Grade B (Very good): 0  
Grade C (Good): C  
Grade D (Fair): D  
Grade E (Poor): 0

**P-Reviewer:** Liu J, United States; Liu J, United States; Moshref L, Saudi Arabia

**Received:** December 8, 2021

**Peer-review started:** December 8, 2021

**First decision:** January 26, 2022

**Revised:** January 30, 2022

**Accepted:** March 16, 2022

**Article in press:** March 16, 2022

**Published online:** May 16, 2022



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### Abstract

#### BACKGROUND

Maisonneuve fracture is a special type of ankle fracture that consists of proximal fibular fracture, a lesion of the inferior tibiofibular syndesmotic complex (interosseous ligament, anterior inferior tibiofibular ligament and posterior inferior tibiofibular ligament), and injury of the medial structure of the ankle (deltoid ligament tear or medial malleolar fracture). The accepted mechanism of Maisonneuve fracture is pronation external rotation according to the Lauge-Hansen classification. In this paper, we report a rare pattern of Maisonneuve fracture, which has the characteristics of both pronation external rotation ankle fracture and supination adduction ankle fracture.

#### CASE SUMMARY

A 31-year-old female patient accidentally sprained her right ankle while walking 5 d before hospitalization in our hospital. The patient was initially missed in other hospitals and later rediagnosed in our outpatient department. Full-length radiographs of the lower leg revealed proximal fibula fracture, inferior tibiofibular joint separation, and medial malleolar fracture involving the posterior malleolus, which was also revealed on computed tomography scans. Magnetic resonance imaging revealed rupture of the anterior inferior tibiofibular ligament and anterior talofibular ligament. We diagnosed a rare pattern of Maisonneuve fracture with proximal fibular fracture, inferior tibiofibular joint separation, medial malleolar fracture and ruptures of the anterior inferior tibiofibular ligament and anterior talofibular ligament. The patient underwent open reduction and internal fixation in our hospital. A 6-mo postoperative follow-up confirmed a good clinical outcome.

#### CONCLUSION

To our knowledge, this rare pattern of Maisonneuve fracture has not been previously described. The possible mechanism of injury is supination adduction combined with pronation external rotation. Careful analysis of the injury mechanism of Maisonneuve fracture is of great clinical significance and can better guide clinical treatment.



**Key Words:** Ankle fracture; Maisonneuve fracture; Mechanism analysis; Pronation external rotation; Supination adduction; Case report

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**Core Tip:** We report a rare pattern of Maisonneuve fracture, which has the characteristics of both pronation external rotation and supination adduction. The patient was initially missed in other hospital and later rediagnosed in our hospital. The patient underwent open reduction and internal fixation. A 6-mo postoperative follow-up confirmed a good clinical outcome. To our knowledge, this rare pattern of Maisonneuve fracture has not been previously described. The possible mechanism of injury is supination adduction combined with pronation external rotation. Careful analysis of the injury mechanism of Maisonneuve fracture is of great clinical significance and can better guide clinical treatment.

**Citation:** Zhao B, Li N, Cao HB, Wang GX, He JQ. Rare pattern of Maisonneuve fracture: A case report. *World J Clin Cases* 2022; 10(14): 4684-4690

**URL:** <https://www.wjgnet.com/2307-8960/full/v10/i14/4684.htm>

**DOI:** <https://dx.doi.org/10.12998/wjcc.v10.i14.4684>

## INTRODUCTION

Maisonneuve fracture is a special type of ankle fracture that consists of proximal fibular fracture, a lesion of the inferior tibiofibular syndesmotic complex (interosseous ligament, anterior inferior tibiofibular ligament and posterior inferior tibiofibular ligament), and injury of the medial structure of the ankle (deltoid ligament tear or medial malleolar fracture)[1,2]. Understanding the injury mechanism of ankle fractures can better guide their treatment[3]. The accepted mechanism of Maisonneuve fracture is pronation external rotation according to the Lauge-Hansen classification[4].

In this paper, we report a rare pattern of Maisonneuve fracture, which has the characteristics of both pronation external rotation ankle fracture and supination adduction ankle fracture. To our knowledge, this is the first time that this rare pattern of Maisonneuve fracture has been reported, and there are no similar cases in the English literature.

## CASE PRESENTATION

### Chief complaints

A 31-year-old female patient accidentally sprained her right ankle while walking 5 d before hospitalization in our hospital.

### History of present illness

She felt pain and gradual swelling in her right ankle and could not stand or walk normally. No significant relief was found after rest. The patient was admitted to the emergency department of another hospital for X-ray examination, which indicated a fracture of the right medial malleolus. The patient received manual reduction and external fixation with braces. Two days before hospitalization, the patient was reviewed in the outpatient department of our hospital. The patient complained of extensive pain around the ankle joint. The patient was admitted to our hospital for further examination and treatment.

### History of past illness

She had no other history of past illnesses.

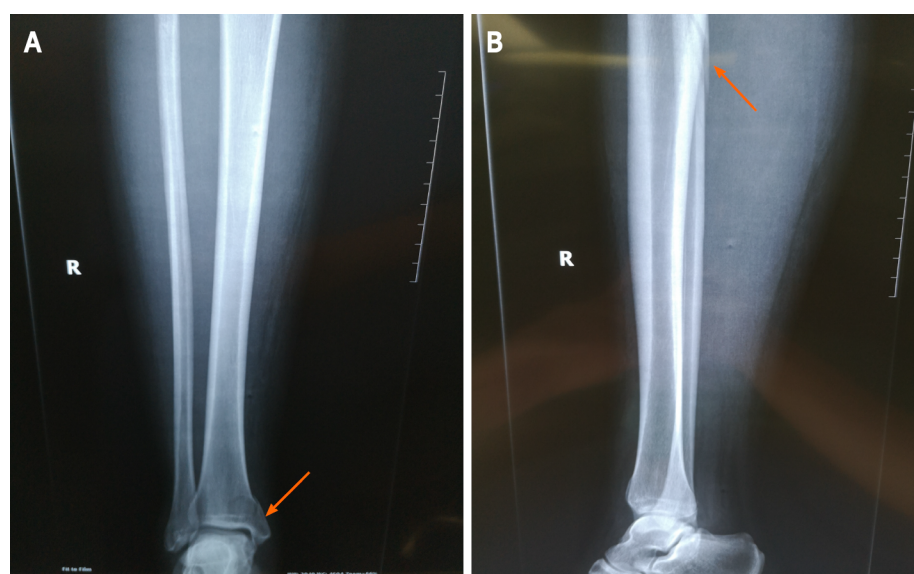
### Personal and family history

She had no genetic or familial disease history.

### Physical examination

Physical examination revealed a closed ankle injury with extreme tenderness, swelling and subcutaneous ecchymoses around the ankle joint. There was also tenderness and subcutaneous ecchymoses at the proximal fibula. Neurological examination showed no obvious abnormalities. The dorsalis pedis pulse and posterior tibial artery pulse were palpable.





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**Figure 1** Preoperative radiographic view of the ankle and leg. A: Preoperative anteroposterior radiographic view of the ankle and leg (arrow); B: Preoperative lateral radiographic view of the ankle and leg (arrow). Full-length radiographs of the lower leg revealed proximal fibula fracture (arrow) and medial malleolar fracture (arrow).

### Laboratory examinations

Laboratory examinations revealed no obvious abnormality.

### Imaging examinations

Full-length radiographs of the lower leg revealed proximal fibula fracture, inferior tibiofibular joint separation, and medial malleolar fracture involving the posterior malleolus (Figure 1), which was also revealed on computed tomography (CT) scans (Figure 2A and B). The proximal fibula fracture was located approximately 7 cm from the distal end of the fibula head, and the fracture line was long and oblique, which is similar to a Maisonneuve fracture and belongs to pronation external rotation fracture according to the Lauge-Hansen classification. The medial malleolar fracture was a vertical fracture, which is similar to supination adduction fracture according to the Lauge-Hansen classification. Magnetic resonance imaging revealed rupture of the anterior inferior tibiofibular ligament and anterior talofibular ligament, surrounded by areas of high signal representing edema and hemorrhage (Figure 2C and D).

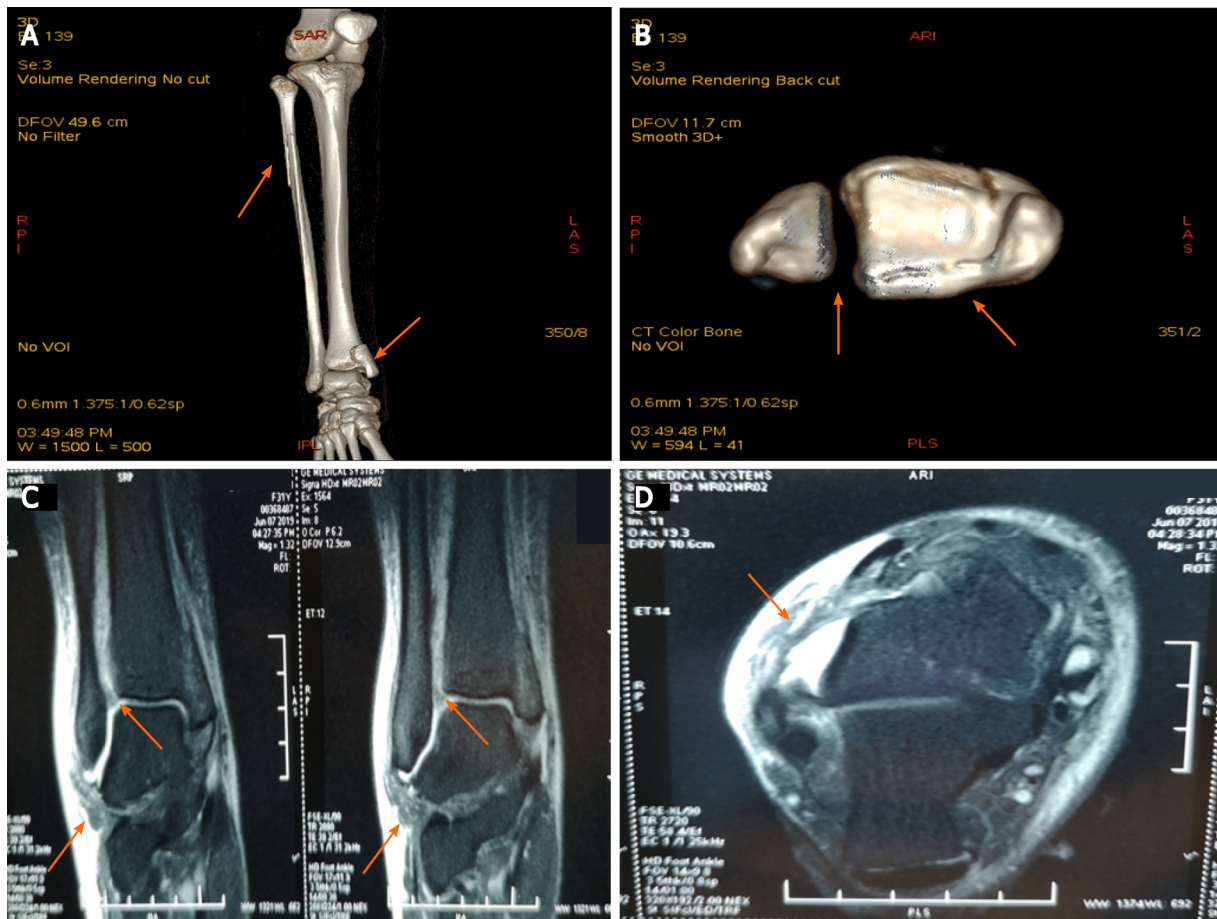
## FINAL DIAGNOSIS

We diagnosed a rare pattern of Maisonneuve fracture with proximal fibular fracture, inferior tibiofibular joint separation, medial malleolar fracture and ruptures of the anterior inferior tibiofibular ligament and anterior talofibular ligament.

## TREATMENT

On the second day after admission, we performed open reduction and internal fixation of the right ankle fracture in the operating room. Meanwhile, ligament exploration and repair were performed. Epidural anesthesia was used. After successful anesthesia, the patient was placed in the supine position. Routine disinfection, dressing, and tourniquet were performed.

First, the inferior tibiofibular syndesmosis was explored by a lateral approach. The inferior tibiofibular syndesmosis was separated, and the anterior inferior tibiofibular ligament was ruptured. The length of the fibula was restored, and the inferior tibiofibular syndesmosis was reduced. Kirschner wire was used for temporary fixation. After satisfactory anatomical reduction by fluoroscopy, the syndesmosis was fixed with locking plate screws. The screw placement direction was oriented 30° from posterior to anterior with slight dorsiflexion of the ankle. Next, the medial malleolar fracture was reduced by an arc-shaped incision along the posterolateral side of the medial malleolus and fixed by two 3.5-mm partially threaded cannulated screws (Figure 3). The fracture was still fretting and was



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**Figure 2** Three-dimensional computed tomography scan and magnetic resonance imaging of the ankle and leg. A: Anterior view of the computed tomography (CT) scan of the ankle and leg (arrow); B: Axis view of the CT scan of the ankle (arrow); C: Sagittal magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) of the ankle (arrow); D: Axial MRI of the ankle (arrow); A and B: CT scan revealed proximal fibula fracture, inferior tibiofibular joint separation, and medial malleolar fracture involving the posterior malleolus (arrow); C and D: MRI revealed rupture of the anterior inferior tibiofibular ligament and anterior talofibular ligament (arrow).

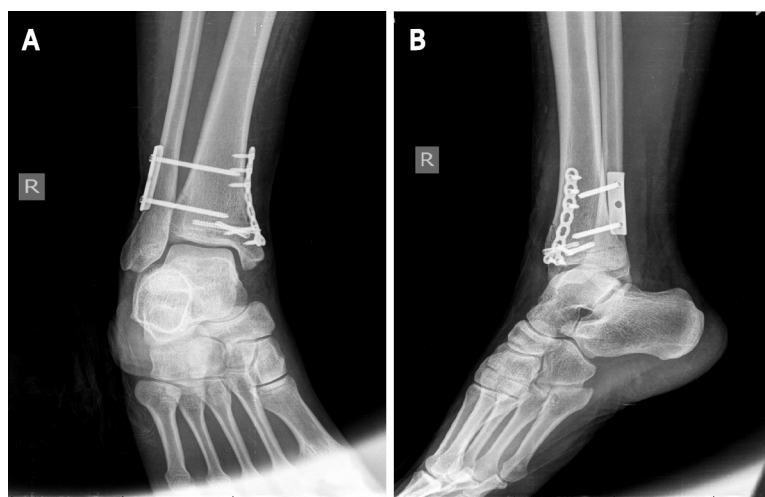
supplementally fixed with microplate screws. Finally, the anterior talofibular ligament was repaired with absorbable sutures at the lateral incision. Intraoperative stress radiographs showed that the fracture was in good alignment and that the tibiofibular syndesmosis was stable.

## OUTCOME AND FOLLOW-UP

Postoperatively, the ankle was immobilized in a short-leg cast for two weeks, and then active and passive non-weight bearing exercise of the ankle was started. Three months after the operation, reexamination of the radiographs showed that the fracture line of the medial malleolus disappeared, the fibula fracture line was blurred, and extensive callus formed around the broken end of the fibula fracture (Figure 4A and B). Then, the plate and all screws were removed (Figure 4C). Subsequently, the patient gradually performed weight-bearing, functional exercises. At 6 mo postoperative, the patient's ankle range of motion was fully restored to her preinjury level. The patient's American Orthopedic Foot and Ankle Society hindfoot-ankle scale[5] score was 100 points.

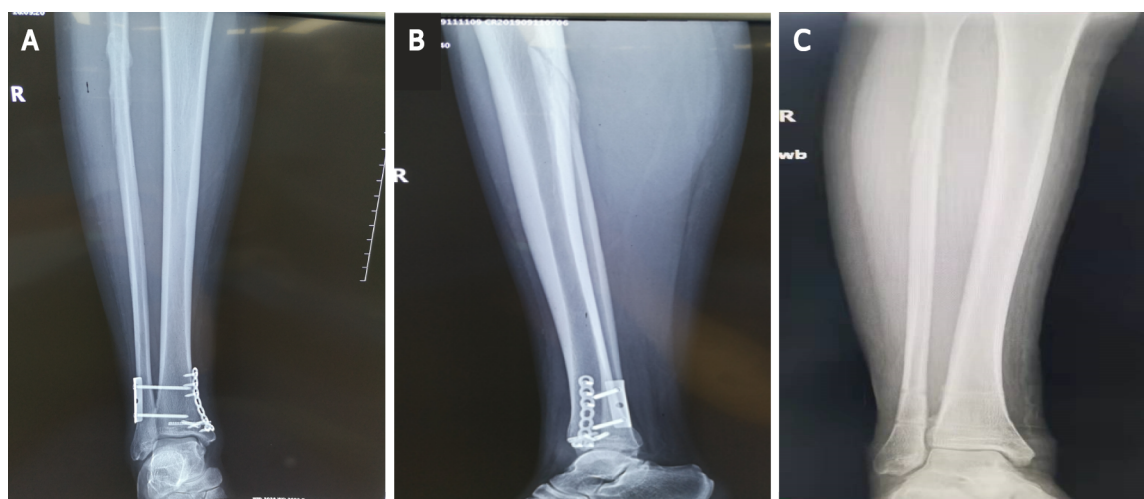
## DISCUSSION

Maisonneuve fracture was first named in 1840 by the French surgeon Maisonneuve[6]. According to the literature, Maisonneuve fractures account for approximately 7% of ankle fractures[7]. Maisonneuve fracture is often missed because most patients complain of ankle pain rather than proximal fibula pain [8]. In this case, the patient was initially admitted to an outside hospital. Since the patient only complained of pain in the ankle, only an ankle radiograph was performed. The results suggested medial malleolar fracture with slight separation of the inferior tibiofibular syndesmosis. The patient was treated



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**Figure 3** Immediate postoperative radiographic view of the ankle. A: Immediate postoperative anteroposterior radiographic view of the ankle; B: Immediate postoperative lateral radiographic view of the ankle.



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**Figure 4** Three months postoperative radiographs of the ankle and leg. A and B: Anteroposterior and lateral radiographic view of the ankle and leg before removal of internal fixation; C: Anteroposterior view of the ankle and leg after removal of internal fixation.

conservatively. Three days after the injury, the patient was re-examined in our outpatient department due to ankle pain. Maisonneuve fracture was confirmed by careful physical examination and full-length radiographs of the lower leg. These results suggest that Maisonneuve fracture should be highly suspected in patients with simple medial malleolar fracture. Careful examination of the entire lower leg should be performed in all patients with ankle fractures. For patients with suspected Maisonneuve fracture, full-length leg radiographs or even stress-position radiographs should be taken.

Understanding the mechanism of injury is very important for the treatment of ankle fracture[9]. For either closed reduction or open reduction, the physician can reduce the fracture according to the opposite direction of the injury mechanism[10,11]. The Lauge-Hansen classification provides a sequential mechanism of injury that considers soft tissue as well as osseous structures in the development of ankle fractures[12]. According to the Lauge-Hansen classification, ankle fractures can be divided into four types: Supination external rotation, supination adduction, pronation external rotation and pronation abduction[13,14].

Most scholars classify Maisonneuve fractures as pronation external rotation ankle fractures according to the Lauge-Hansen classification[15,16]. Once injured, the medial structure is damaged first, including rupture of the deltoid ligament or fracture of the medial malleolus, followed by rupture of the anterior inferior tibiofibular ligament or avulsion fracture of the attachment, rupture of the interosseous ligament, rupture of the interosseous membrane, and proximal fibula fracture. If violence persists, rupture of the posterior inferior tibiofibular ligament or avulsion fracture of the posterior tibial tubercle

may occur[17-19].

The case presented here is a rare pattern of Maisonneuve fracture, which has the characteristics of both pronation external rotation ankle fracture and supination adduction ankle fracture. In this case, the fibula fracture was long and oblique, and the fracture line was proximal to the fibula. There was also inferior tibiofibular separation. These characteristics are similar to a typical Maisonneuve fracture, which is a pronation external rotation ankle fracture. However, the medial malleolus of the typical pronation external rotation ankle fracture usually presents an oblique fracture or rupture of the deltoid ligament, without rupture of the anterior talofibular ligament or calcaneofibular ligament[20]. In this case, the medial malleolar fracture was vertical, and there was rupture of the anterior talofibular ligament, which is consistent with supination adduction ankle fracture.

The separate fracture configurations raise questions regarding the injury mechanism of the presented case. Inferior tibiofibular separation and proximal fibula fracture are clearly prone to external rotation patterns. However, the fracture morphology of the medial malleolus and rupture of the anterior talofibular ligament display the characteristics of a supination adduction pattern. We hypothesized that the mechanism of this injury may be that the foot starts in supination and suddenly experiences an adduction type injury, resulting in rupture of the anterior talofibular ligament and vertical fracture of the medial malleolus. The original position of the foot was changed to pronation when the patient tried to stand, which was followed by an external rotation injury resulting in inferior tibiofibular separation and proximal fibula fracture.

## CONCLUSION

In summary, Maisonneuve fracture is an uncommon fracture that is often overlooked in patients with ankle injuries. An accurate and thorough physical examination, appropriate radiological examinations and intraoperative stress fluoroscopy are necessary. Careful analysis of the injury mechanism of Maisonneuve fracture is of great clinical significance and can better guide clinical treatment.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank the nursing term of the Department of Foot and Ankle Surgery I, Tianjin Hospital, for the support, and our patient for participating in this study.

## FOOTNOTES

**Author contributions:** Zhao B and He JQ contributed to the conception and design of the study; Zhao B and Li N contributed to the drafting of manuscripts; Zhao B, Cao HB and Wang GX contributed to the carry out of the surgery; all authors have read and approve the final manuscript.

**Informed consent statement:** The patient provided consent for the publication of the images.

**Conflict-of-interest statement:** The authors have no conflict of interest to disclose.

**CARE Checklist (2016) statement:** The authors have read the CARE Checklist (2016), and the manuscript was prepared and revised according to the CARE Checklist (2016).

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**S-Editor:** Fan JR

**L-Editor:** A

**P-Editor:** Fan JR



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