FACTORS AFFECTING THE FUNCTIONAL OUTCOME OF OXFORD PHASE 3 UNICOMPARTMENTAL KNEE ARTHROPLASTY

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ABSTRACT

Objective: To determine the factors that affect the functional outcome of Oxford Phase 3 unicompartmental knee arthroplasty (UKA).

Methods: We assessed a total of 52 UKA knees of 49 patients with a minimum follow-up of 2 years (24-72 months). We recorded the results for Range of motion (ROM) and body mass index (BMI) and the presence of patello-femoral arthrosis (PFA). In the radiological evaluation, we measured the posterior tibial slope (PTS), the tibial plateau angle (TPA) and the femorotibial angle, in addition to an assessment using the Oxford radiological criteria. Patients were grouped by age, follow-up time, BMI, radiological criteria, PFA presence, occurrence of complications and revision surgery. The clinical and functional results of these groups were compared statistically. Results: A total of 40 women and 9 men participated in the study, with an average age of 60 years, and a mean BMI of 34.6. No significant differences were found among the age and PFA groups. Postop VAS scores were high and knee evaluation scores were significantly lower in the morbidly obese group and in the groups with postop TPA <85º and >90º. The revision ratio was 11.5%. Conclusion: Postop TPA, PTS and morbid obesity are the most significant factors that can lead to revision surgery. Level of Evidence IV, Case series.

Keywords: Osteoarthritis. Arthroplasty. Replacement. Knee. Pain. 

RESUMO

Objetivo: Determinar os fatores que afetam o resultado funcional da artroplastia unicompartmental do joelho Oxford Phase 3 (AUJ).

Métodos: Foram incluídos 52 joelhos AUJ de 49 pacientes com um período mínimo de 2 anos (24-72 meses) de acompanhamento. Foram registrados: amplitude de movimento (ADM), índice de massa corporal (IMC) e presença de artrose femoropatelar (AFP). Na avaliação radiológica, medimos o declive tibial posterior (DTP), o ângulo do planalto tibial (APT) e o ângulo femorotibial, além de usarmos os critérios radiológicos de Oxford. Os pacientes foram agrupados por idade, tempo de acompanhamento, IMC, critérios radiológicos, presença de AFP e ocorrência de complicações e cirurgias de revisão. Os resultados clínicos e funcionais desses grupos foram comparados estatisticamente. Resultados: Participaram do estudo 40 pacientes do gênero feminino e 9 do gênero masculino, com idade média de 60 anos, IMC de 34,6. Não foram encontradas diferenças significativas entre os grupos formados por idade e presença de AFP. As marcações da EVA pós-operatória foram altas e as marcações do joelho foram significativamente baixas no grupo com obesidade mórbida e nos grupos com APT pós-operatória <85º e >90º. A taxa de revisão foi de 11,5%. Conclusão: APT e DTP pós-operatório e obesidade mórbida são os fatores mais significativos que podem levar à cirurgia de revisão. Nível de Evidência IV, Série de casos.

Descritores: Osteoartrite. Artroplastia do Joelho. Dor.

Citation: Polat AE, Polat B, Gürpınar T, Peker B, Tüzün T. Factors affecting the functional outcome of Oxford phase 3 unicompartimental knee arthroplasty. Acta Ortop Bras. [online]. 2020;28(2):78-83. Available from URL: http://www.scielo.br/aob.

All authors declare no potential conflict of interest related to this article.

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Article received on 06/12/2019, approved on 09/19/2019.
INTRODUCTION
Osteoarthritis is the most common joint disease in the world and the most frequent cause of chronic musculoskeletal pain. In 80-90% of the cases, osteoarthritis begins in the medial compartment and tends to remain unicompartamental. There are different types of surgical treatment for single compartment osteoarthritis, including Total Knee Arthroplasty (TKA), High Tibial Osteotomy or Unicompartmental Knee Arthroplasty (UKA), when conservative treatments are not responsive. Oxford Phase 3 UKA, was introduced in 1998 by Murray and Goodfellow et al. Many advantages of the UKA are mentioned in the literature, including: minimally invasive incision, preservation of the anterior and posterior cruciate ligaments, fewer bone cuts, less postoperative blood loss and pain, better functional outcomes, reduced hospitalization time, lower costs and faster and earlier rehabilitation. Its disadvantages include surgical technical difficulties and experience requirements. Additionally, higher revision rates have been reported for UKA compared to total knee arthroplasty (TKA). Improper patient selection and implant malpositioning may be responsible for this high rate. With the development of implants, component materials, surgical fixation techniques, and the definition of correct indications and correct patient selection criteria, positive results have been recorded for UKA in the last 20 years.

All surgeons must analyse the pitfalls and underlying clinical and radiological reasons for early failure of UKA before performing this procedure. However, as the surgeons’ experience increases, their surgical technique improves, ensuring a more accurate implant positioning. We aimed to evaluate radiological and clinical results according to Oxford radiological criteria. \( \text{TTPA, PFA presence in MRI, occurrence of complications and}
\text{postoperative blood loss and pain, better functional outcomes,}
\text{reduced hospitalization time, lower costs and faster and}
\text{earlier rehabilitation. Its disadvantages include surgical}
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All surgeons must analyse the pitfalls and underlying clinical and radiological reasons for early failure of UKA before performing this procedure. However, as the surgeons’ experience increases, their surgical technique improves, ensuring a more accurate implant positioning. We aimed to evaluate radiological and clinical results and determine the factors that affect the functional outcome of Oxford Phase 3 unicompartamental knee arthroplasty cases. This study also intends to be a helpful tool for surgeons, identifying the causes of early failure of UKA.

MATERIAL AND METHODS
Participants
In this retrospective study, we analysed 52 knees of 49 patients who underwent Oxford Phase 3 unicompartamental knee arthroplasties (Oxford Partial Knee, Biomet Orthopaedics, Bridgend, UK) for anteromedial osteoarthritis. These surgeries were performed by the last author (TT) or under his control, in the Orthopaedics and Traumatology Clinic of the Istanbul Training and Research Hospital, between 2011 and 2016. The inclusion criteria were: presenting non-inflammatory arthritis with an intact anterior cruciate ligament, passively correctable angular deformity under 10° varus and 5° valgus, flexion deformity under 15° and no lateral compartment involvement. Patients with a minimum follow-up of 2 years were included. This study was approved by the Research Ethics Committee (ID:47 date:07/06/2016). All patients who took part in this study signed forms of informed consent, agreeing to its publishing.

Clinical and radiological evaluation
As part of the preoperative radiological evaluation, we assessed weight-bearing anteroposterior and flexed lateral knee X-rays, patella tangential X-rays, varus-valgus stress X-rays and ortho- roentgenograms. Preoperatively, all 52 knees underwent MRI examinations. The groups divided according to the presence of patellofemoral arthrosis (PFA) were based on its grading shown in the Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI). Postoperatively, we performed orthoroentgenograms, weight-bearing anteroposterior and flexed lateral knee X-ray imaging.

Table 1. Oxford radiological criteria.

| Femoral component | Description | Criterion |
|-------------------|-------------|-----------|
| A/A               | Varus/valgus angle | < 10° varus to < 10° valgus |
| B/B               | Flexion/extension angle | < 5° flexion to < 5° extension |
| C/C               | Medial/lateral placement | Central |
| D                 | Posterior fit | Flush < 2 mm overhang |

| Tibial component | Description | Criterion |
|------------------|-------------|-----------|
| E/E              | Varus/valgus angle | < 10° varus to < 5° valgus |
| F/F              | Posteriorinferior tilt | 8° ± 5° |
| G                 | Medial fit | Flush or < 2 mm overhang |
| H                 | Posterior fit | Flush or < 2 mm overhang |
| J                 | Anterior fit | Flush or < 3 mm overhang |
| K                 | Lateral fit | Flush, no gap |

Source: Oxford Phase 3 unicompartamental knee prosthesis user’s manual.

Figure 1. Postoperative correct positioning of unicompartamental knee arthroplasty according to Oxford radiological criteria.
Statistical analysis
For the statistical analysis, we used the SPSS 15.0 software for Windows. The ratio of categorical variables in the groups was tested by Chi-square analysis. The Monte Carlo simulation was applied when the conditions were not met. Because the numerical variables presented no normal distribution, two independent group comparisons were made using the Mann-Whitney U test and the Kruskal Wallis test in all groups. Subgroup analysis was done using Mann-Whitney U test and interpreted by Bonferroni correction. The relationships between numerical variables were examined by Spearman correlation analysis, since the parametric test conditions were not provided. The Cox Regression Analysis Forward Method was used in the model, based on the factors that could affect the revision rates. Statistical significance level alpha was accepted as $p < 0.05$.

RESULTS
In total, 40 patients (81.6%) were women and 9 (18.4%) were men. Their mean age was 60 years (in a range of 49-80), and their mean BMI was 34.6 (in a range of 22-56.9). Two (3.8%) of the patients had normal weight (BMI below 25 kg/m²), 11 (21.2%) were overweight (BMI, 25-29.9 kg/m²), 31 (59.6%) were obese (BMI, 30-34.9 kg/m²) and 8 (15.4%) were morbidly obese (BMI ≥ 35 kg/m²). Two (3.8%) of the patients had a history of cancer, and 3 (5.7%) had a history of arthroplasty. The left knees were operated on 26 (52%) times, and 14 (28%) times the right knees. The mean age of the patients was 60 years (in a range of 49-80). The average OKS, KSS, and fKSS scores improved significantly, from 12.7, 43.3 and 34.8 in preoperative measurements to 37.8, 85.7 and 82 in postoperative measurements, respectively, and the mean VAS scores decreased from 9 to 2.6. Additionally, ROM improved from 111° to 123° (Table 2).

Patients were grouped according to the following postoperative measured angles: PTS (87° – 79° is normal), FTA (over 175° is varus, 170° – 175° is normal, under 170° is valgus) and TPA (over 90° is valgus, 90° normal, 89° – 85° is minor varus, under 85° is varus). KSS, fKSS, OKS, VAS and ROM were compared postoperatively in these groups (Tables 4 and 5).

### Table 2. Pre and postoperative scores.

|          | Preoperative | Postoperative | p   |
|----------|--------------|---------------|-----|
| ROM      | 111.2 ± 12.6 (90-130) | 123.6 ± 14.6 (75-135) | < 0.001 |
| KSS      | 43.3 ± 9.7 (17-69) | 85.7 ± 19.9 (31-100) | < 0.001 |
| n (%)    |              |               |     |
| Excellent | —            | 40 (76.9)     |     |
| Good     | —            | 5 (9.6)       |     |
| Fair     | 2 (3.8)      | 2 (3.8)       |     |
| Poor     | 50 (96.2)    | 5 (9.6)       |     |
| fKSS     | 34.8 ± 19.0 (0-90) | 82.0 ± 24.4 (0-100) | < 0.001 |
| n (%)    |              |               |     |
| Excellent | 1 (1.9)      | 38 (73.1)     |     |
| Good     | 1 (1.9)      | 7 (13.5)      |     |
| Fair     | 2 (3.8)      | 2 (3.8)       |     |
| Poor     | 48 (92.3)    | 5 (9.6)       |     |
| OKS      | 12.7 ± 7.8 (0-32) | 37.8 ± 10.4 (7-48) | < 0.001 |
| n (%)    |              |               |     |
| Severe   | 43 (82.7)    | 6 (11.5)      |     |
| Moderate | 6 (11.5)     | 2 (3.8)       |     |
| Mild     | 3 (5.8)      | 6 (11.5)      |     |
| Normal   | 38 (73.1)    |               |     |
| VAS      | 9.0 ± 1.1 (6-10) | 2.6 ± 2.3 (0-10) | < 0.001 |

Values are shown as mean ± SD (range) unless otherwise indicated.

### Table 3. Defects and revision percentages according to Oxford radiological criteria.

| Criterion                                      | Defects | Revisions |
|------------------------------------------------|---------|-----------|
| A. Femoral component > 10° varus-valgus positioning defect | 3 (5.7) | 2 (66.6) |
| B. Femoral component > 5° of flexion-extension positioning defect | 4(7.69) | —         |
| C. Femoral component central positioning defect at coronal plane | 12 (23) | 2 (16.6) |
| D. Femoral component posterior fit defect | —       | —         |
| E. Tibial component > 10° varus-valgus positioning defect | 2 (3.8) | —         |
| F. Posterior tibial tilt defect | —       | —         |
| G. Tibial component more than 2 mm medial flush | 1 (1.9) | 1 (100)  |
| H. Tibial component posterior fit defect | —       | —         |
| J. Tibial component anterior fit defect | 1 (1.9) | —         |
| K. Tibial component lateral fit defect | 4 (7.69) | 3 (75)   |

### Table 4. Preoperative and postoperative mean values.

|          | Preoperative | Postoperative | p   |
|----------|--------------|---------------|-----|
| PTS      | 82.9 ± 1.9 (78-87) | 84.0 ± 4.0 (76-102) | 0.074 |
| n (%)    | > 87         | —             |     |
| 87-79    | 51 (98.1)    | 41 (78.8)     |     |
| < 79     | 1 (1.9)      | 6 (11.5)      |     |
| FTA      | 179.4 ± 3.0 (174-190) | 174.9 ± 4.6 (162-185) | < 0.001 |
| n (%)    | > 175        | 47 (90.4)     | 20 (38.5) |
| 175-170  | 5 (9.6)      | 28 (53.6)     |     |
| < 170    | —            | 4 (7.7)       |     |
| TPA      | 84.8 ± 2.7 (80-90) | 88.7 ± 3.7 (72-98) | < 0.001 |
| n (%)    | > 85         | 23 (44.2)     | 5 (9.6)   |

Values are shown as n (%). PTS: posterior tibial slope; FTA: femorotibial angle; TPA: tibial plateau angle. Values are shown as mean ± SD (range) unless otherwise indicated.

### Table 5. Comparison of postoperative clinical scores in the postoperative tibial plateau angle groups.

| Tidal plateau angle | Preoperative | Postoperative | p |
|---------------------|--------------|---------------|---|
| > 90°               |              |               |   |
| 90 (normal)         | 112.5        | 31.8          | 0.033 |
| 85-89               | 54.0         | 32.5          |     |
| < 85                | 45.0         | 63.6          | 0.048 |
| ROM postop          | 21.0         | 12.7          | 0.014 |
| KSS                 | 21.0         | 38.8          | 6.6 |
| OKS                 | 43.0         | 59.4          | 11.7 |
| VAS                 | 6.00         | 2.24          | 0.002 |

Values are shown as mean ± SD (range) unless otherwise indicated.

The patients, whose mean age was 60 years, were divided into three age groups: those younger than 55 years, those between 55 and 70 years, and those between 70 and 80 years.
55 and 65 years, and those older than 65 years. There were no statistically significant differences among these groups. Furthermore, there were no statistically significant differences among the patients grouped according to the presence of PFA, identified by MRI. In the morbidly obese group, the postop clinical scores were significantly lower and the VAS scores, significantly higher, while clinical scores were excellent in the other BMI groups.

Complications developed in five patients (9.6%). Three of the complications were intra-operative eminence fractures and two of them were insert dislocations. The eminence fractures occurred in the first UKA surgery experiences, while the surgeon was making a horizontal tibial cut, and were fixed intra-operatively with two headless cannulated screws (Figure 2). In the subsequent surgeries, a sagittal saw was used to avoid this complication. Two of these patients underwent revision surgeries, 7 months and 45 months after the UKA operation. The eminence fracture healed completely with the revision. Both these patients also had implant misplacement. The other patient with an eminence fracture did not have any implant placement defects and their postoperative functional outcomes were good. Two patients were referred to the authors’ clinic because of ROM limitations, and insert dislocations were diagnosed at 3 and 10 months after the operation. Both patients had a history of knee distortion. Radiologic evaluations of the patients with insert dislocation did not reveal any misplacement at implantation, except for the central placement of the femoral component (placed 4 mm or 3 mm laterally). Furthermore, two of the five patients who developed complications were morbidly obese and three of them were obese.

Six (11.5%) of the patients required revision (Table 6). The UKA revision rate in the authors’ clinic was 11.5%, while the TKA revision rate for the same period was 8%; UKAs performed between 2011-2016 accounted for 4.6% of the knee replacement surgeries conducted during that period.

Using the Cox Regression Analysis, Forward Method, we assessed the age, sex, BMI, presence of PFA, postop TPA, postop FTA, postop PTS, varus and valgus alignment of femoral component and follow-up times, composing a model of the factors that could lead to the need of revision. In this analysis, the postop tibial plateau angle (Figure 3), the postop posterior tibial slope (Figure 4) and morbid obesity were determined as the most significant factors that could lead to revision.

### Table 6. Summary of findings on revision patients.

| PTS/F | FTA | TPA/E | Fem component | Varus/Valgus | C | G | J | K | BMI | Complication | Revision Cause | Revision time | Age | Revision implant |
|-------|-----|-------|---------------|--------------|---|---|---|---|-----|-------------|----------------|--------------|-----|-----------------|
| 1     | 102 | 183   | 78 VAR        | N            | N | N | N | 4 mm | 1 mm | 38.7 | None          | T. loosening + collapse | 52nd m. | 53  | Constrain      |
| 2     | 90  | N     | 84 VAR        | N            | N | N | N | 3 mm | 33   | None | Eminent fracture | T.+F. loosening | 45th m. | 65  | Primer         |
| 3     | N   | 183   | 12 VAR        | 2 mm Med     | N | N | N | 1 mm | 41.6 | None | Eminent fracture | T. loosening + collapse | 7th m. | 58  | Primer         |
| 4     | N   | N     | N             | N            | N | N | N | 47   | None | None | T.+F. loosening | 7th m. | 51  | Primer         |
| 5     | N   | 183   | 98 VAL        | 3 mm Med     | N | N | N | 2 mm | 50   | None | T. loosening + collapse | 12nd m. | 53  | Constrain      |
| 6     | 76  | 185   | 72 VAR        | 12 VAR       | N | N | N | 49   | None | None | T.+F. loosening | 12nd m. | 56  | Primer         |

BMI: body mass index; C: femoral component central positioning; FTA: femorotibial angle; G: tibial component more than 2 mm medial flush; J: tibial component anterior fit defect; K: tibial component lateral fit defect; m: month; N: normal; PTS/F: posterior tibial slope or F: posterior tibial tilt; T: tibial; F: femoral; TPA/E: tibial plateau angle or E: tibial component varus-valgus; VAR: varus; VAL: valgus; Med: medial; mm: millimeter.

Figure 2. Eminent fracture fixed intra-operatively with two headless cannulated screws.

Figure 3. 4th year postoperatively, anteroposterior/lateral X-ray view of unicompartmental knee arthroplasty with tibial plateau angle 8° valgus.

Figure 4. 3rd year postoperatively, anteroposterior/lateral X-ray view of unicompartmental knee arthroplasty with PTS 78°.
DISCUSSION

Although the patient selection process has been shown to be one of the most important factors for obtaining successful outcomes in UKA surgery, there are still some controversial indication criteria.\(^9,12,13\) Kozin et al. were the first to identify the traditional criteria for such indications. They were limited to the patients with medial osteoarthritis over 60 years old, with a body weight under 82 kg, no anterior knee pain and no arthrosis, except for minimal erosive changes in the patellofemoral region.\(^1,2\) The indications were then expanded by Berend and Lambordi.\(^3\) According to these authors, to be eligible for UKA it is sufficient to have posteriorly preserved anterior full-thickness medial cartilage loss, fully correctable varus deformity, full-thickness preserved on the lateral cartilage and a solid anterior cruciate ligament.\(^4\) The indication criteria of the Oxford Group include knees with medial arthrosis (except inflammatory diseases), a solid anterior cruciate ligament (ACL), flexion contractures under 15 degrees, full-thickness on the lateral cartilage and fully correctable inarticular varus deformities.\(^5\) In the present study, the parameters of the Oxford Group were preferred when determining the indications. The presence of PFA is controversial in the indication criteria. It was a contraindication in previous studies,\(^6,7\) but in recent publications this is no longer accepted.\(^8\) In accordance with the current literature, this study shows that PFA does not affect early and mid-term functional outcome of UKA.

Price et al. reported that the 10-year cumulative survival rate in 52 Oxford UKA patients under 60 years of age was not significantly different from that of patients older than 60 years.\(^9\) In this study, no statistically significant differences were found among age groups. We believe that the UKA is a suitable method for patients of all ages, provided that the indications are met. In 2013, Murray et al. demonstrated, with multicenter trials, that there is no reduction in survival rates in patients with high BMI values (such as 45-50).\(^10\) In this study, while the functional outcomes of patients who were obese, overweight and had normal weight were excellent, those of morbidly obese patients were significantly lower. We believe that it is not appropriate to perform UKA on morbidly obese patients, although it is possible to achieve excellent results in obese and overweight patients with effective planning and correct surgical techniques. Most authors believe that valgus overcorrection of the varus deformity is the main cause for lateral arthrosis\(^11\) and some surgeons recommend that the implants should be placed in the minimal varus position, in order to avoid lateral arthrosis.\(^12\) Perkins et al. reported that FTA angles greater than 3° varus and 7° valgus decreased the functional results and increased the revision rate.\(^13\) Consonantly with the literature, in this study the implant placement detected postoperative was 1.5° minor varus. The results were worse in patients whose tibial component position had an angle smaller than 85° (varus) or bigger than 90° (valgus), while the 85° – 90° TPA groups (normal and minor varus) had excellent results. Furthermore, four out of six patients requiring revision presented TPA disturbances. Bruni et al. found an increase in the PTS in the revised knees of 84 UKA patients, due to spontaneous osteonecrosis, so they recommend the avoidance of PTS overcorrection.\(^14\) All three patients who were diagnosed with PTS misplacement had been submitted to revision. Shakespeare et al. reported that femoral component malalignment did not lead to disorientation in the lower extremity,\(^15\) but many publications state that this angular deformity could lead to polyethylene wear.\(^16\) In this study, the group with the femoral component placed more than 10° varus had lower Knee Society Score (KSS), with a statistically significant difference, and their VAS was significantly higher.

In the Swedish Knee Arthroplasty Register of 2004, which reported a wider number of cases, the most common cause of failure was aseptic loosening of components.\(^1\) In this study, six (11.5%) patients required revision. For three of them, the reason was the loosening of the femoral component, while in the other three, it was the tibial loosening and collapse. In five of these cases, what caused the need for revision was incorrect implant positioning, in the case of the other patient, it was caused by morbid obesity (Table 5). Moreover, it was seen that BMI, postoperative TPA and postoperative PTS were the most significant factors that could motivate revision. We found no statistically significant difference between the clinical and radiological outcomes of UKA surgeries performed in the first two years and those of the two subsequent years. However, 60% of the complications and all the revisions occurred during the first two years of UKA surgical experience. This shows the importance of surgical experience.

We understand that the retrospective nature of this study is a limitation. It could be a guide for new surgeons starting to perform UKA surgeries, demonstrating the complications caused by intra-operative eminence fractures, which are not mentioned in the literature. Another factor that attests the value of this study is the insufficient information in the literature about the effect of the PTS angle on implant survival. Multicenter studies should be conducted so that more meaningful results can be obtained, investigating more case series.

CONCLUSION

As the results indicate, implant positioning is a critical factor in the functional outcome and survival rates of UKA. Tibial plateau angle and posterior tibial slope are the radiological parameters that should be particularly considered. In terms of patient selection, UKA is not a suitable option for morbidly obese patients. It may be possible to reduce significantly the revision rates through appropriate patient selection, correct surgical technique and increased surgical experience. If these conditions are met, UKA is a method that can provide excellent results for anteromedial arthrosis in patients of middle and advanced ages.

AUTHORS’ CONTRIBUTIONS: Each author contributed individually and significantly to the development of the manuscript. AEP: data collection and analysis and writing of the study; BPO: surgeries, conceptualization of the study and of the manuscript; TG: surgeries and writing of the study; BPE: surgeries and revision of the study; TT: surgeries, conceptualization of the study and development of the research project.

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