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| 著者<br>Author(s) | Watanabe, Kei / Katsumi, Keiichi / Ohashi, Masayuki / Shibuya, Yohei / Izumi, Tomohiro / Hirano, Toru / Endo, Naoto / Kaito, Takashi / Yamashita, Tomoya / Fujiwara, Hiroyasu / Nagamoto, Yukitaka / Matsuoka, Yuji / Suzuki, Hidekazu / Nishimura, Hirose / Terai, Hidetomi / Tamai, Koji / Tagami, Atsushi / Yamada, Syuta / Adachi, Shinji / Yoshio, Toshitaka / Ushio, Shuta / Harimaya, Katsumi / Kawaguchi, Kenichi / Yokoyama, Nobuhiko / Oishi, Hidekazu / Doi, Toshiro / Kimura, Atsushi / Inoue, Hirokazu / Inoue, Gen / Miyagi, Masayuki / Saito, Wataru / Nakano, Atsushi / Sakai, Daisuke / Nukaga, Tadashi / Ikegami, Shota / Shimizu, Masayuki / Futatsugi, Toshimasa / Ohtori, Seiji / Furuya, Takeo / Orita, Sumihisa / Imagama, Shiro / Ando, Kei / Kobayashi, Kazuyoshi / Kiyas, Katsuhito / Murakami, Hideki / Yoshioka, Katsuhito / Seki, Shoji / Hongo, Michio / Kakutani, Kenichi / Yurube, Takashi / Aoki, Yasuchika / Oshima, Masashi / Takahata, Masahiko / Iwata, Akira / Endo, Hiroki / Abe, Tetsuya / Tsukanishi, Toshinori / Nakanishi, Kazuyoshi / Watanabe, Kota / Hikata, Tomohiro / Suzuki, Satoshi / Isogai, Norihiro / Okada, Eijiro / Funao, Haruki / Ueda, Seiji / Shiono, Yuta / Nojiri, Kenya / Hosogane, Naobumi / Ishii, Ken |
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Surgical outcomes of spinal fusion for osteoporotic thoracolumbar vertebral fractures in patients with Parkinson’s disease: what is the impact of Parkinson’s disease on surgical outcome?

Kei Watanabe 1*, Keiichi Katsumi 1, Masayuki Ohashi 1, Yohei Shibuya 1, Tomohiro Izumi 1, Toru Hirano 1, Naoto Endo 1, Takashi Kaito 2, Tomoya Yamashita 2, Hiroyasu Fujiwara 2, Yukitaka Nagamoto 2, Yuji Matsuoka 3, Hidekazu Suzuki 4, Hiroseke Nishimura 5, Hidetomi Terai 6, Koji Tamao 6, Atushi Tagami 6, Syuta Yamada 6, Shinji Adachi 6, Toshitaka Yoshii 6, Shuta Ushio 6, Katsumi Harimaya 6, Kenichi Kawaguchi 6, Nobuhiko Yokoyama 7, Hidekazu Oishi 7, Toshiro Doi 7, Atsushi Kimura 8, Hirokazu Inoue 8, Gen Inoue 8, Masayuki Miyagi 9, Wataru Saito 9, Atsushi Nakano 10, Daisuke Sakai 11, Tadashi Nukaga 11, Shota Ikegami 12, Masayuki Shimizu 12, Toshimasa Futatsugi 12, Seiji Ohtori 13, Takeo Furuya 13, Sumihisa Orita 13, Shiro Imagama 14, Kei Ando 14, Kazuyoshi Kobayashi 14, Katsuhito Kiyasu 15, Hideki Murakami 16, Katsuhiko Yoshioka 16, Shoji Seki 17, Michio Hongo 18, Kenichiro Kakutani 19, Takashi Yurube 19, Yasuchika Aoki 20, Masashi Oshima 21, Masahiko Takahata 22, Akira Iwata 22, Hiroki Endo 23, Tetsuya Abe 24, Toshinori Tsukishita 24, Kazuyoshi Nakanishi 25, Kota Watanabe 26, Tomohiro Hikata 27, Satoshi Suzuki 27, Norihiro Isogai 27, Eiji Okada 27, Haruki Funao 27, Seiji Ueda 27, Yuta Shiono 27, Kenya Nojiri 27, Naobumi Hosogane 26,27 and Ken Ishii 27,28

Abstract

Background: To date, there have been little published data on surgical outcomes for patients with PD with thoracolumbar OVF. We conducted a retrospective multicenter study of registry data to investigate the outcomes of fusion surgery for patients with Parkinson’s disease (PD) with osteoporotic vertebral fracture (OVF) in the thoracolumbar junction.

Methods: Retrospectively registered data were collected from 27 universities and their affiliated hospitals in Japan. In total, 26 patients with PD (mean age, 76 years; 3 men and 23 women) with thoracolumbar OVF who underwent spinal fusion with a minimum of 2 years of follow-up were included (PD group). Surgical invasion, perioperative complications, radiographic sagittal alignment, mechanical failure (MF) related to instrumentation, and clinical outcomes were evaluated. A control group of 296 non-PD patients (non-PD group) matched for age, sex, distribution of surgical procedures, number of fused segments, and follow-up period were used for comparison.

(Continued on next page)
Results: The PD group showed higher rates of perioperative complications ($p < 0.01$) and frequency of delirium than the non-PD group ($p < 0.01$). There were no significant differences in the degree of kyphosis correction, frequency of MF, visual analog scale of the symptoms, and improvement according to the Japanese Orthopaedic Association scoring system between the two groups. However, the PD group showed a higher proportion of non-ambulators and dependent ambulators with walkers at the final follow-up ($p < 0.01$).

Conclusions: A similar surgical strategy can be applicable to patients with PD with OVF in the thoracolumbar junction. However, physicians should pay extra attention to intensive perioperative care to prevent various adverse events and implement a rehabilitation regimen to regain walking ability.

Keywords: Parkinson’s disease, Osteoporosis, Vertebral fracture, Spinal fusion, Thoracolumbar spine, Visual analogue scale, Japanese orthopaedic association score, Outcome, Perioperative complication, Kyphosis,
were retrieved from the same database (Table 1); there were no statistically significant differences with respect to age, sex, BMI, distribution of collapsed vertebral levels, distribution of surgical procedures, number of fused segments, and follow-up period between the PD and non-PD groups ($p > 0.05$ for all comparisons). The outcome measures were compared between the 2 study groups.

### Table 1 Comparison of demographic data between the 2 groups

|                        | PD group | Non-PD group | $p$ value |
|------------------------|----------|--------------|-----------|
| N of patients          | 26       | 296          | –         |
| Age at operation (years) median, [IQR] | 76.0 [8.0] | 75.0 [10.8] | 0.3343    |
| Sex [male/female] (N of patients) | 3/23     | 66/230       | 0.1999    |
| BMI (kg/m$^2$) median, [IQR]              | 22.1 [6.3] | 22.5 [4.7]  | 0.1600    |
| Vertebral level (N of patients) | T11: 3   | T10: 16      | 0.6112    |
|                                      | T12: 8   | T11: 25      |           |
|                                      | L1: 11   | T12: 116     |           |
|                                      | L2: 4    | L1: 103      |           |
|                                      |          | L2: 36       |           |
| Surgical procedure (N of patients)      | APSF: 2  | ASF: 19      | 0.7176    |
|                                      | PSF: 3   | APSF: 27     |           |
|                                      | 3CO: 9   | PSF: 37      |           |
|                                      | VP + PSF: 12 | 3CO: 84     |           |
|                                      |          | VP + PSF: 129|           |
| Number of fused segment (segment) median, [IQR] | 4.0 [2.0] | 4.0 [2.0]   | 0.9534    |
| BMD YAM (%) median, [IQR]              | 73.0 [25.0] | 69.0 [19.8] | 0.9295    |
| Number of patients with existing vertebral fracture [fx/no fx] (N of patients) | 8/18 | 108/188 | 0.7338 |
| Number of comorbidity (disease) median, [IQR] | 1.0 [0.0] | 1.0 [1.0] | < 0.0001 |
| Follow-up period (month) median, [IQR]          | 37.0 [19.0] | 44.0 [28.0] | 0.1787    |

**Abbreviation:** N number, IQR interquartile range, BMI body mass index, ASF anterior spinal fusion, APSF combined anterior and posterior spinal fusion, PSF posterior spinal fusion, 3CO 3 column osteotomy, VP + PSF vertebroplasty with PSF, BMD bone mineral density, YAM young adult mean, fx fracture

**Surgical procedure**

The surgical procedures comprised various instrumentations or bone grafting techniques used in the retrospective multicenter database. The ASF surgical procedure was performed using a rod or plate system with an iliac or rib bone strut graft or metal cage. The APSF surgical procedure was a combination of ASF using an iliac or fibula strut graft and PSF using a pedicle screw and rod system. The PSF surgical procedure was performed using a pedicle screw and rod system, occasionally using laminar hooks in the uppermost or lowermost instrumented vertebra. The 3CO surgical procedure consisted of PSF as described above and vertebral column resection with reconstruction using a metal cage or eggshell shortening osteotomy through the posterior approach only. For VP + PSF, the surgical procedure consisted of PSF as described above and VP using hydroxyapatite blocks or paste performed via a transpedicular approach.

**Evaluation**

Surgical invasion, radiographic sagittal alignment, mechanical failure (MF), and clinical outcomes were evaluated from medical charts, plain radiographs, and computed tomography images. The evaluation of surgical invasion included the operation time, intraoperative blood loss, and perioperative complications. Radiographic sagittal alignment included the local kyphosis angle on the lateral view of plain radiographs measured between the upper endplate of the uninvolved vertebra above the affected level and the lower endplate of the uninvolved vertebra below the affected level using the Cobb method (Fig. 1). The evaluation of mechanical failure included the presence of pedicle screw pull-out, cage migration, fracture of the uppermost or lowermost instrumented vertebra, hook dislodgement, and rod fracture. Clinical outcomes were evaluated using the visual analog scale (VAS; ranging from 0 [no symptoms] to 100 [worst symptoms]) for lower back pain and lower extremity pain or numbness; the Japanese Orthopaedic Association Scoring system ([JOA score], ranging from 0 [worst condition] to 15 [best condition]) (Additional file 1); walking ability using the following grading system: grade 1, independent walking; 2, dependent walking with a cane; 3, dependent walking with walker; and 4, unable to walk (requiring a wheelchair); and occurrence of subsequent vertebral fracture. The rate of improvement in both
lower back pain and lower extremity pain was assessed with the JOA score using Hirabayashi’s method [20] as follows: ([postsurgical score - presurgical score] / [15 - presurgical score] × 100).

**Statistical analysis**

All analyses were performed using StatView-J 5.0 software (Abacus Concepts, Berkeley, CA). The changes in investigated parameters before and after surgery were evaluated using the nonparametric Wilcoxon signed-rank test. The changes in continuous and discrete variables between the two groups were compared using the nonparametric Mann-Whitney U test and the chi-squared test, respectively. *P* < 0.05 was considered to be statistically significant in all analyses.

**Results**

The results are summarized in Table 2.

**Surgical invasion**

There were no significant differences in the operation time and intraoperative blood loss between the 2 groups.

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**Table 2** Comparison of the outcome variables data between the 2 groups

| Outcome Variables                              | PD group        | Non-PD group     | p value  |
|------------------------------------------------|-----------------|------------------|----------|
| Operation time (min.) median, [IQR]            | 214.0 [100.0]   | 237.0 [130.5]    | 0.4193   |
| Intraoperative blood loss (ml) median, [IQR]   | 450.0 [627.0]   | 402.0 [575.5]    | 0.2761   |
| Perioperative complication [complication/ no complication] (N of patients) | 10/16 | 45/251 | 0.0063 |
| Local kyphosis angle (°) median, [IQR]         | 27.0 [21.0]     | 26.0 [19.0]      | 0.9965   |
|                                          | 6.0 [18.0]      | 8.0 [13.4]       | 0.8072   |
|                                          | 18.7 [18.0]     | 14.0 [18.0]      | 0.3357   |
| Amount of kyphosis correction                | 10.8 [26.1]     | 10.0 [16.0]      | 0.6611   |
| Mechanical failure (%)                       | 26.9            | 17.9             | 0.7464   |
| JOA score improvement rate (%) median, [IQR]  | 50.0 [38.5]     | 53.8 [39.2]      | 0.1074   |
| Walking ability (N of patients)               |                 |                  |          |
| Preop.                                         | Grade1: 2       | Grade1: 16       | 0.1030   |
|                                                | Grade 2: 1      | Grade 2: 44      |          |
|                                                | Grade 3: 4      | Grade 3: 86      |          |
|                                                | Grade 4: 19     | Grade 4: 150     |          |
| Final                                          | Grade1: 3       | Grade1: 114      | 0.0007   |
|                                                | Grade 2: 5      | Grade 2: 92      |          |
|                                                | Grade 3: 12     | Grade 3: 70      |          |
|                                                | Grade 4: 6      | Grade 4: 19      |          |
| Subsequent vertebral fracture (%)             | 38.4            | 35.1             | 0.7338   |

Abbreviation: N number, IQR interquartile range, JOA score, Japanese Orthopaedic Association scoring system
(p > 0.05 for both comparisons). The PD group showed a higher rate of perioperative complications (odds ratio 3.48; 95% CI 1.488–8.168, p = 0.0060) and frequency of delirium than the non-PD group (PD group: 23.1%, non-PD group: 3.4%)(odds ratio 8.58; 95% CI 2.83–26.009, p < 0.0001) (Table 3).

Radiographic sagittal alignment
Regarding the correction of the local kyphosis angle after surgery, both groups showed significant correction between the before surgery and the final follow-up (p < 0.05 for both comparisons) (Fig. 1). There were no significant differences in the degree of kyphosis correction between the groups (p > 0.05).

MF
In the PD group, 8 mechanical failures (26.9%) were identified. There were no significant differences in the frequency of mechanical failures between the two groups (Table 4).

Clinical outcome
Regarding the severity of neurological symptoms according to the VAS, both groups demonstrated significant improvement in lower back pain and lower extremity pain at the final follow-up (p < 0.05 for all comparisons) (Fig. 2). There were no significant differences in the VAS preoperatively and at the final follow-up between the groups. Both groups demonstrated significant improvement in the JOA score (p < 0.05 for all comparisons) (Fig. 3), and there was no significant difference in the improvement rate between the groups. There were no significant differences in the walking ability grade preoperatively; however, the PD group showed a higher proportion of patients in grades 3 and 4 at the final follow-up (odds ratio 3.788; 95% CI 1.719–8.347, p = 0.0007). Overall, 114 patients (35.4%) sustained a subsequent vertebral fracture and there were no significant differences in the incidence between the groups.

Discussion
In the present study, patients with PD unexpectedly demonstrated acceptable and similar clinical outcomes compared to non-PD patients, including surgical invasion, local kyphosis correction, frequency of instrumentation-related MF, severity of symptoms, and JOA score. On the other hand, patients with PD demonstrated a higher rate of perioperative complications and inferior walking ability after surgery due to characteristic physical conditions related to PD itself.

Frequency of perioperative complications
According to a large, national insurance database, PD was significantly associated with an increased risk for major medical complications (adjusted OR, 1.22; 95% CI, 1.11–1.34) including myocardial infarction, acute renal failure, pulmonary embolism, cerebrovascular accidents, and pneumonia following thoracolumbar fusion surgery. [21] According to another large, nationwide inpatient database, PD was a significant predictor of major postoperative complications (OR, 1.74; 95% CI, 1.37–2.22) including surgical site infection, sepsis, pulmonary

| Table 3 Details of perioperative complications |
|-----------------------------------------------|
| Perioperative complication                  | PD group (N of patients) | Non-PD group (N of patients) |
| Overall [incidence]                         | 10 (38.5%)               | 45 (15.2%)                  |
| Intraoperative complication                |                             |                             |
| Surgical site infection                     | 0                           | 7                           |
| Neurological deficit                        | 1                           | 6                           |
| Dural tear                                  | 0                           | 5                           |
| Epidural hematoma                           | 0                           | 3                           |
| Massive hemorrhage (> 5000 ml)             | 0                           | 1                           |
| Postoperative complication                 |                             |                             |
| Delirium                                    | 6                           | 10                          |
| Cardiac disease                             | 0                           | 4                           |
| Gastrointestinal disease                    | 0                           | 4                           |
| Deep venous thrombosis                      | 1                           | 2                           |
| Urinary tract infection                     | 1                           | 0                           |
| Pneumonia                                   | 0                           | 2                           |
| Electrolyte abnormality                     | 0                           | 1                           |
| Decubitus                                   | 1                           | 0                           |

Abbreviation: N number
embolism, respiratory complications, cardiac events, stroke, and renal failure following spine surgery. [22] In addition, postoperative delirium was more common in patients with PD (30.3%) than in the controls (4.3%), which was in agreement with the present study. Postoperative delirium is a common complication of surgical procedures in the elderly, [23] and acute delirium increases morbidity and mortality leading to prolonged hospitalization. [24, 25] Therefore, physicians should be aware of the various adverse events that may occur, especially due to interruption of anti-parkinsonism drugs following spine surgery. Moreover, a noteworthy finding is that despite the relatively higher risk of potentially fatal parkinsonism-hyperpyrexia syndrome, [26] no such cases occurred in the present study. Needless to say, the establishment of a partnership between orthopedic surgeons and neurologists is essential for perioperative care, and early intervention against adverse events is desirable.

**Surgical strategy for patients with PD and OVF in the thoracolumbar junction**

Thoracolumbar OVF is a common spinal disorder in elderly patients, [5, 6] which frequently causes neurological symptoms including spinal cord or cauda equina impairment. Based on previous reports, a consensus has emerged that delayed neurological impairment following OVF is primarily caused by instability of the fracture site rather than mechanical neural compression by ectopic bony fragments. [9, 10, 15] Based on the previous studies, patients with PD have higher chance of postoperative complications and unintended revision surgeries after spinal fusion. Additionally, surgically treated patients with PD tend to have poorer outcomes and lower fusion rates, especially in patients who undergo multi-level fusion. [27, 28] A consensus has emerged that long-segment corrective fusion surgery tends to be necessary for global sagittal malalignment, owing to the progressively stooped posture as PD progresses, and the risk of unfavorable biomechanics related to a long lever arm.

![Low back pain VAS and Lower extremity VAS](image)

**Table 4** Details of mechanical failures

| Mechanical failure                  | PD group (N of patients) | Non-PD group (N of patients) |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Overall (incidence)                 | 7 (26.9%)                | 53 (17.9%)                  |
| Pedicle/vertebral screw pull-out    | 4                        | 24                          |
| Intervertebral cage migration       | 0                        | 9                           |
| Uppermost vertebral fracture       | 2                        | 11                          |
| Lowermost vertebral fracture       | 1                        | 4                           |
| Hook dislodgement                   | 0                        | 3                           |
| Rod fracture                        | 0                        | 2                           |

Abbreviation: N number

Fig. 2 a Box and whisker plot showing the mean lower back pain VAS preoperatively and at the final follow-up. b Box and whisker plot showing the mean lower extremity pain VAS preoperatively and at the final follow-up. VAS, visual analog scale
Although various surgical procedures have provided acceptable outcomes for thoracolumbar OVF, we hypothesized that patients with PD and thoracolumbar OVF may have poorer surgical outcomes. In the present study, they surprisingly showed acceptable outcomes as assessed by several indicators including frequency of peroperative complications, amount of kyphosis correction, and improvement of the VAS and JOA score. With regard to the walking ability, patients with PD had a higher proportion of non-ambulators and dependent ambulators with walkers, which might be caused by the diminished baseline physical capacity due to PD itself. Therefore, the results of the present study can conclude that the same conventionally used surgical indications are applicable to PD patients with OVF in the thoracolumbar junction.

There are some limitations of this study. First, the study design was retrospective, and the study was based on data review, which did not allow us to evaluate the severity of preoperative vertebral collapse, surgical details, such as choice of approach, use of supplemental anchors, and concomitant decompression procedures, and global spinal alignment. Second, selection bias could not be avoided due to different indications for non-PD and PD patients based on the various motor or non-motor symptoms associated with PD. Third, we could evaluate the PD status according to the simple 5-grade classification, but could not evaluate the severity of motor- or non-motor symptoms associated with PD. Therefore, a prospective study with a larger sample size that provides detailed specific symptoms on PD must be conducted to elucidate the effect of PD on surgical outcomes in patients with OVF. Despite these limitations, this study presents the largest case series evaluating the surgical outcomes in patients with PD and OVF in the thoracolumbar junction; the number of such patients is currently increasing due to unprecedented aging of the population.

**Conclusion**

Spinal fusion for patients with PD and OVF in the thoracolumbar junction resulted in good radiological and symptomatic improvement, except for frequency of perioperative complications and functional improvement of walking ability, compared to non-PD patients. Moreover, they were similar with regard to prevalence of instrumentation-related MF and subsequent vertebral fracture. The results of this study imply that same conventionally used surgical strategy can be applicable for patients with PD and OVF in the thoracolumbar junction. However, multidisciplinary, intensive perioperative care must be provided by the orthopedic surgeons and neurologists in unison to prevent various adverse events and a rehabilitation regimen implemented to regain the patients’ walking status before the OVF-related injury.

**Additional file**

**Additional file 1:** The assessment Scale Proposed by the Japanese Orthopaedic Association. The Japanese Orthopaedic Association Scoring system (JOA score) consists of 2 categories (subjective and objective symptoms), ranging from 0 (worst condition) to 15 (best condition). (DOCX 22 kb)

**Abbreviations**

ASF: anterior spinal fusion; BMD: bone mineral density; JOA: Japanese Orthopaedic Association; OVF: osteoporotic vertebral fracture; PD: Parkinson’s disease; PSF: posterior spinal fusion; VAS: Visual Analog Scale

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**Availability of data and materials**

All relevant data supporting the conclusions are included within the article and tables. The dataset used and analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

**Authors’ contributions**

KW1: study design, analyses and interpretation of data, draft of manuscript with tables and figures. NH, KI, TH, NE: substantial contributions to conception and critical revision for important intellectual content. AT, YM, HT, AT, TY, KH, KK2, AK, GI, AN, DS, SI1, SO1, TF, S2, KK4, HM, SS, MH, KK5, YA, MO2, MT, HE, TA, KN, KW2, TH: substantial contributions to study design and data acquisition. KK1, MO1, YS, TI, TY, HF, YN, HS, KN, HT, SY, SA, SU, NY, HO, TD, HI, MAI, WS, TM, MS, TF, SO2, KA, KK3, KY, TY, AI, TT, SS, NI, EQ, HF, SU, YS, KN: data acquisition. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

**Ethics approval and consent to participate**

The study was approved by the ethics committee of all institutions involved. Informed consent was waived by the above ethics committee as the
present retrospective cohort study involved already existing data and records at the time of investigation, and did not retain personal identifiers of the gathered information.

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Author details
1Department of Orthopaedic Surgery, Niigata University Medical and Dental General Hospital, 1-757 Asahimachi Dori, Chuo-ku, Niigata City, Niigata 951-8510, Japan. 2Department of Orthopaedic Surgery, Osaka University, 2-2 Yamadaoka, Suita City, Osaka 565-0871, Japan. 3Department of Orthopaedic Surgery, Tokyo Medical University, 6-1-1 Shinjuku, Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo 160-8502, Japan. 4Department of Orthopaedic Surgery, Osaka City University, 1-4-3 Asahimachi, Abeno-ku, Osaka 545-8585, Japan. 5Department of Orthopaedic Surgery, Nagasaki University, 1-7-1 Sakamoto, Nagasaki City, Nagasaki 852-8501, Japan. 6Department of Orthopaedic Surgery, Tokyo Medical and Dental University, 1-5-45 Yushima, Bunkyo-ku, Tokyo 113-8519, Japan. 7Department of Orthopaedic Surgery, Kyushu University, 3-1-1 Maidashi, Higashi-ku, Fukuoka City 812-8582, Japan. 8Department of Orthopaedic Surgery, Jichi Medical University, 3311-1 Yakushi, Shimosuke City, Tochigi 329-0498, Japan. 9Department of Orthopaedic Surgery, Kitasato University, 1-15-1 Kitasato, Minami-ku, Sagamihara City, Kanagawa 252-0374, Japan. 10Department of Orthopaedic Surgery, Osaka Medical College, 2-7 Daigakumachi, Takatsuki City, Osaka 569-0801, Japan. 11Department of Orthopaedic Surgery, Tokai University, 143 Shimokasuya, Isehara City, Kanagawa 259-1193, Japan. 12Department of Orthopaedic Surgery, Shinshu University, 3-1-1, Asahi, Matsumoto City, Nagano 390-8621, Japan. 13Department of Orthopaedic Surgery, Chiba University, 1-8-1 Inohana, Chuo-ku, Chiba City, Chiba 260-8670, Japan. 14Department of Orthopaedic Surgery, Nagaoyu University, 65 Tsurumai-sho, Showa-ku, Nagaoyu City, Aichi 466-8560, Japan. 15Department of Orthopaedic Surgery, Kochi University, Oko-cho Kohasu, Nankoku City, Kochi 783-8505, Japan. 16Department of Orthopaedic Surgery, Kanazawa University, 13-1 Takaramachi, Kanazawa City, Ishikawa 920-8641, Japan. 17Department of Orthopaedic Surgery, University of Toyama, 2630 Sugitani, Toyama City, Toyama 930-0194, Japan. 18Department of Orthopaedic Surgery, Akita University, 1-1-1 Hondo, Akita City, Akita 010-8543, Japan. 19Department of Orthopaedic Surgery, Kobe University, 7-5-1 Kusunoki-cho, chuo-ku, Kobe City, Hyogo 650-0017, Japan. 20Department of Orthopaedic Surgery, Eastern Chiba Medical Center, 3-6-2 Okayamadai, Togane City, Chiba 283-8686, Japan. 21Department of Orthopaedic Surgery, Niigata University Itabashi Hospital, 301- Oyaguchikamicho, itabashi-ku, Tokyo 173-8610, Japan. 22Department of Orthopaedic Surgery, Hokkaido University, North-15, West-7, kita-ku, Sapporo City, Hokkaido 060-8638, Japan. 23Department of Orthopaedic Surgery, Iwate Medical University, 19-1 Uchimaru, Morioka City, Iwate 020-8505, Japan. 24Department of Orthopaedic Surgery, University of Tsukuba, 1-1-1 Tennodai, Tsukuba City, Ibaraki 305-8577, Japan. 25Department of Orthopaedic Surgery, Hiroshima University, 1-2-3 Kasumi, Minami-ku, Hiroshima City, Hiroshima 734-8551, Japan. 26Department of Orthopaedic Surgery, National Defense Medical College, 3-2 Narni, Tokorozawa City, Saitama 359-8513, Japan. 27Department of Orthopaedic Surgery, Keio University School of Medicine, 35 Shinanomachi, Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo 160-8582, Japan. 28Department of Orthopaedic Surgery, International University of Health and Welfare School of Medicine, Mita, Minato-ku, Tokyo 108-8329, Japan.

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