

16th International Conference on
Clinical & Medical Case Reports

July 23–24, 2021 | Webinar

Volume: 11

Vertical Penile Fracture: The first documented case in scientific literature

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A penile fracture is defined as a 'tear of the tunica albuginea', surrounding the corpus cavernosa of the penis. The injury occurs when the erect penis is subjected to an abnormal 'bending' force, inducing an acute increase in intracavernosal pressures, exceeding the tensile strength of the tunica albuginea (up to 1500mmHg), resulting in a so called 'fracture'. This urological emergency requires operative intervention within 24 hours.

Here, we present a case of a 40 year old gentleman, whom sustained a penile fracture during vigorous sexual intercourse. Apart from not reporting the classical 'popping' sound or having a palpable rolling defect, his age, mechanism of insult and examination findings were all considered 'typical' for this injury. Surprisingly however, the penile MRI reported a "3cm vertical tear" – a very atypical finding indeed.

A literature review was conducted using PubMed. As of June 2020, to our knowledge: there have been no documented cases, written in the English language, of a vertical penile fracture i.e. running in line with the penile axis. Instead, the literature overwhelmingly reports a transverse penile fracture pattern.

Due to the rarity of this fracture pattern, this case advocates the role of a pre-operative penile MRI, enabling a focussed intra-operative exploration. It highlights that more research is required to assess if a vertical fracture pattern has an altered presentation e.g. lack of the classical 'popping' sound? And if long term outcomes differ compared to the more common transverse fracture pattern?

Biography

Dr Sam Hughes obtained his medical degree at Queen's University, Belfast, before moving to Birmingham to complete his foundation training. He is now a Core Surgical Trainee within the Yorkshire and Humber deanery, with a particular focus on Urology. He is actively engaged in quality improvement, research and education, with an ultimate aspiration to pursue a career as a Consultant Urological Surgeon.

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