

[Pathological Fractures of the Humerus: Experience with 76 Cases in a Musculoskeletal Oncology Centre]

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BACKGROUND

Pathological fractures can be caused by numerous local and systemic processes. The humerus is one of the commonest sites of pathological, tumour-associated fractures.

PATIENTS AND METHODS

In a retrospective study, 76 cases of pathological fractures of the humerus were analysed; 57 (75 %) were caused by a malignant disease, 19 fractures were associated with benign musculoskeletal disorders (25 %). The grade of the tumour, treatment strategy, intra- and postoperative complications, and survival rates in malignant tumours were documented.

RESULTS

Two thirds of fractures were localised in the proximal third of the humerus. In 59 % of patients, malignant lesions were metastases (mainly renal cell, breast, lung and prostate cancer), followed by haemato-oncological diseases and primary sarcomas. Most benign tumours were simple bone cysts and enchondromas. A total of 70 patients were treated surgically and only 6 conservatively. Most malignant tumours were treated with compound osteosynthesis and tumour prostheses. Complications in both groups were rare.

CONCLUSION

The demographic transition - with an increasing number of malignancies on the one hand and improved life expectancy under modern, adjuvant therapies on the other - will become a challenge in the treatment of pathological fractures of the humerus for a variety of disciplines.

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