

# Orthopedic Surgery Clerkship

A Quick Reference Guide  
for Senior Medical Students

Adam E.M. Eltorai  
Craig P. Ebersson  
Alan H. Daniels  
*Editors*

 Springer

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## Preface

This quick-reference review is the first book written specifically for third- and fourth-year medical students completing orthopedic surgery rotations. Organized by body part, *Orthopedic Surgery Clerkship* focuses on diagnosis and management of the most common pathologic entities. Each chapter covers history, typical presentation, relevant anatomy, physical examination, imaging, options for nonoperative and operative management, and expected outcomes.

*Orthopedic Surgery Clerkship* is the ideal on-the-spot reference for those seeking fast facts on diagnosis and management. Its bullet-pointed outline format makes this book a perfect addition to a white coat pocket, allowing busy students to find the information they need rapidly. Its content breadth covers the most commonly encountered orthopedic problems in practice.

Students can read the text from cover to cover to gain a general foundation of orthopedic knowledge and then reread specific chapters for more focused subspecialty review. This book will serve as tool to propel students to the next level and help them start their journey as orthopedists on the right foot.

Providence, USA

Adam E. M. Eltorai  
Craig P. Ebersson  
Alan H. Daniels

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# Contents

## Part I The Basics

<b>1 General Orthopedic Terminology</b> . . . . .	3
Anne C. Sullivan and Christopher Sugalski	
<b>2 Radiology: The Basics</b> . . . . .	11
Anne Sullivan, Christopher Sugalski, and D. Daniel Rotenberg	
<b>3 Fractures</b> . . . . .	17
Tracye J. Lawyer and Patrick F. Bergin	
<b>4 Dislocations</b> . . . . .	23
Tracye J. Lawyer and Patrick F. Bergin	
<b>5 Orthopedic Emergencies</b> . . . . .	27
Iliia Iliev, Grant Buchanan, and Franklin Shuler	
<b>6 Principles of Trauma</b> . . . . .	33
Thomas Gill and Brock Johnson	

## Part II The Upper Extremity

<b>7 Physical Exam of the Shoulder</b> . . . . .	39
Navkirat Bajwa and Albert Pearsall	
<b>8 Rotator Cuff Pathology</b> . . . . .	43
Daniel C. Kim and Albert Pearsall	
<b>9 Adhesive Capsulitis</b> . . . . .	47
Christopher E. Urband and John M. Marzo	
<b>10 Calcific Tendonitis</b> . . . . .	51
William M. Wind and Leslie J. Bisson	
<b>11 Proximal Humerus Fractures</b> . . . . .	55
Anna Johnson and Albert Pearsall	
<b>12 Clavicle Fractures</b> . . . . .	61
Daniel C. Kim and Albert Pearsall	
<b>13 Acromioclavicular Joint Separation</b> . . . . .	65
Stephen White and Albert Pearsall	

<b>14</b>	<b>Glenohumeral Pathology</b> . . . . .	69
	Matthew J. Brown and Geoffrey Bernas	
<b>15</b>	<b>Arthroplasty of the Shoulder</b> . . . . .	73
	Matthew Binkley and Robert Ablove	
<b>16</b>	<b>Glenoid Superior Labrum Anterior to Posterior (SLAP) Lesions</b> . . . . .	77
	Matthew Binkley and Marc Fineberg	
<b>17</b>	<b>Biceps Brachii Tendon Injuries: Biceps Tendon Rupture</b> . . . . .	81
	Edward Schleyer and Marc Fineberg	
<b>18</b>	<b>Humeral Shaft Fractures</b> . . . . .	85
	Alan R. Koester	
<b>19</b>	<b>Tennis and Golfer's Elbow: Epicondylitis</b> . . . . .	87
	John Matthews and Keely Boyle	
<b>20</b>	<b>Olecranon Bursitis</b> . . . . .	91
	Joseph Fox and Thomas Duquin	
<b>21</b>	<b>Distal Humeral Fractures</b> . . . . .	93
	Joseph Fox and Thomas Duquin	
<b>22</b>	<b>Olecranon Fracture</b> . . . . .	97
	Timothy P. Bryan and Thomas Duquin	
<b>23</b>	<b>Radial Head Fracture</b> . . . . .	101
	Timothy P. Bryan and Thomas Duquin	
<b>24</b>	<b>Coronoid Fractures</b> . . . . .	105
	Corey T. Clyde	
<b>25</b>	<b>Elbow Dislocation</b> . . . . .	109
	John R. Matthews and Keely Boyle	
<b>26</b>	<b>Degenerative Joint Disease of the Elbow</b> . . . . .	115
	Matthew Binkley and Thomas R. Duquin	
<b>27</b>	<b>Osteoarthritis of the Elbow</b> . . . . .	119
	Matt Binkley and Thomas R. Duquin	
<b>28</b>	<b>Post-traumatic Arthritis of the Elbow</b> . . . . .	123
	Matthew Binkley and Thomas R. Duquin	
<b>29</b>	<b>Cubital Tunnel Syndrome</b> . . . . .	127
	Matt Binkley and Thomas R. Duquin	
<b>30</b>	<b>Radius and Ulna Fractures</b> . . . . .	131
	Adam Martin and Hisham M. Awan	
<b>31</b>	<b>Monteggia and Galeazzi Fractures</b> . . . . .	135
	Adam Martin and Hisham M. Awan	
<b>32</b>	<b>Distal Radius and Ulna Fractures</b> . . . . .	141
	John Alexander and Hisham M. Awan	



---

<b>33</b>	<b>Carpal Tunnel Syndrome</b> . . . . .	147
	Francisco A. Schwartz-Fernandes and Eildar Abyar	
<b>34</b>	<b>Kienbock's Disease (Lunatomalacia)</b> . . . . .	153
	Francisco A. Schwartz-Fernandes and James Vogler	
<b>35</b>	<b>De Quervain's Syndrome</b> . . . . .	157
	Adam Martin and Hisham M. Awan	
<b>36</b>	<b>Dupuytren Disease (Contracture)</b> . . . . .	161
	Steven R. Niedermeier and Hisham M. Awan	
<b>37</b>	<b>Trigger Digit</b> . . . . .	165
	Yoseph A. Rosenbaum and Hisham M. Awan	
<b>38</b>	<b>Scaphoid Fractures</b> . . . . .	169
	Andrew Campbell and Hisham M. Awan	
<b>39</b>	<b>Thumb Ulnar Collateral Ligament Injuries (Gamekeeper's and Skier's Thumb)</b> . . . . .	173
	Andrew Campbell and Hisham M. Awan	
<b>40</b>	<b>Peri-lunate and Lunate Dislocations</b> . . . . .	175
	Amy Speeckaert and Hisham M. Awan	
<b>41</b>	<b>First Metacarpal Base Fractures</b> . . . . .	179
	Amy Speeckaert and Hisham M. Awan	
<b>42</b>	<b>Non-scaphoid Carpal Bone Fractures</b> . . . . .	183
	Joseph Meyerson and Hisham M. Awan	
<b>43</b>	<b>Boxer's Fractures</b> . . . . .	187
	Yoseph A. Rosenbaum and Hisham M. Awan	
<b>44</b>	<b>Phalangeal Fractures</b> . . . . .	189
	Yoseph A. Rosenbaum and Hisham M. Awan	
<b>45</b>	<b>Phalangeal Dislocations</b> . . . . .	193
	Yoseph A. Rosenbaum and Hisham M. Awan	
<b>46</b>	<b>Metacarpal Fractures</b> . . . . .	197
	Yoseph A. Rosenbaum and Hisham M. Awan	
<b>47</b>	<b>Traumatic Upper Extremity Amputations</b> . . . . .	201
	Margaret Jain and Erik White	
<b>48</b>	<b>Tears of the Triangular Fibrocartilage Complex</b> . . . . .	207
	Robert C. Matthias	
<b>49</b>	<b>Carpal Instability</b> . . . . .	213
	Grant S. Buchanan and Alan Koester	
<b>50</b>	<b>Flexor Tendon Injuries of the Upper Extremity</b> . . . . .	221
	Andrew Campbell and Kanu Goyal	
<b>51</b>	<b>Extensor Tendon Injuries of the Upper Extremity</b> . . . . .	225
	Erin F. Ransom and Nileshkumar M. Chaudhari	

<b>52 Nerve Injury</b> .....	229
Brooks W. Ficke and Nileshkumar M. Chaudhari	
<b>53 Upper Extremity Replantation</b> .....	233
Dana Lycans, Jeffrey Kim, and Alan Koester	
<b>54 Ulnar Compressive Neuropathies</b> .....	237
Francisco A. Schwartz-Fernandes and Nicolette Clark	
<b>55 Degenerative Arthritis of the Hand</b> .....	241
James L. McFadden and Nileshkumar M. Chaudhari	
<b>56 Inflammatory Arthritis of the Hand</b> .....	245
Jonathan Ludwig and Nileshkumar Chaudhari	
<b>57 Chronic Regional Pain Syndrome</b> .....	249
Joseph J. King	
<b>58 Upper Extremity Infections</b> .....	253
Martin Skie	
 <b>Part III Lower Extremity</b>	
<b>59 Hip Fractures</b> .....	259
Brock Johnson and Thomas Gill	
<b>60 Hip Dislocations</b> .....	267
Jeffery Kim, Charles Bishop, Dana Lycans, and James B. Day	
<b>61 Osteoarthritis of the Hip and Knee</b> .....	273
Nicole Meschbach, Daniel J. Gehling, and Andrew H. Glassman	
<b>62 Avascular Necrosis</b> .....	277
John Alexander, Richard Boe, and Joel Mayerson	
<b>63 Total Hip Arthroplasty</b> .....	285
Karl Balch and Andrew H. Glassman	
<b>64 External Snapping Hip</b> .....	289
Anne Marie Chicorelli	
<b>65 Femoral Shaft Fractures</b> .....	291
LeeAnne Torres, Dana Lycans, and Akshay Goel	
<b>66 Knee Ligament Injuries</b> .....	299
Aristides I. Cruz Jr.	
<b>67 Meniscal Tear</b> .....	305
Jonathan Gillig and Albert Pearsall	
<b>68 Extensor Mechanism Injuries: Quadriceps and Patellar Tendon Ruptures</b> .....	309
David C. Flanigan, Joshua Troyer, Joshua S. Everhart, John W. Uribe, Eric Wherley, and Gautam P. Yagnik	

---

<b>69</b>	<b>Tibial Plateau Fractures</b> . . . . .	<b>315</b>
	Patrick Bergin and Tracye J. Lawyer	
<b>70</b>	<b>Distal Femoral Fractures</b> . . . . .	<b>323</b>
	Patrick Bergin and Tracye J. Lawyer	
<b>71</b>	<b>Patella Fractures</b> . . . . .	<b>329</b>
	Patrick Bergin and Tracye J. Lawyer	
<b>72</b>	<b>Patella Dislocation</b> . . . . .	<b>335</b>
	David Flanigan, Benjamin Leger-St. Jean, and Alex C. DiBartola	
<b>73</b>	<b>Total Knee Arthroplasty</b> . . . . .	<b>339</b>
	Karl Balch and Andrew H. Glassman	
<b>74</b>	<b>Patellofemoral Pain Syndrome</b> . . . . .	<b>343</b>
	Ryan J. McNeilan and Grant L. Jones	
<b>75</b>	<b>Iliotibial Band Syndrome</b> . . . . .	<b>347</b>
	Anne Marie Chicorelli	
<b>76</b>	<b>Tibial and Fibular Fracture</b> . . . . .	<b>349</b>
	Grant S. Buchanan and Franklin D. Shuler	
<b>77</b>	<b>Stress Fractures</b> . . . . .	<b>353</b>
	Michael J. Chambers	
<b>78</b>	<b>Metatarsalgia</b> . . . . .	<b>359</b>
	Tonya W. An, Alexander Kish, Matthew Varacallo, Amiethab A. Aiyer, and Ettore Vulcano	
<b>79</b>	<b>Hallux Valgus</b> . . . . .	<b>365</b>
	Satheesh K. Ramineni	
<b>80</b>	<b>Heel Pain</b> . . . . .	<b>369</b>
	Jordan Ernst and Brian Carpenter	
<b>81</b>	<b>Ankle Sprains and Fractures</b> . . . . .	<b>373</b>
	Shane D. Rothermel and Paul Juliano	
<b>82</b>	<b>Talar Fracture</b> . . . . .	<b>379</b>
	Kyle Duncan and Brian Carpenter	
<b>83</b>	<b>Calcaneus Fractures</b> . . . . .	<b>383</b>
	Jyoti Sharma and Paul J. Juliano	
<b>84</b>	<b>Lisfranc Injuries</b> . . . . .	<b>387</b>
	Tonya W. An, Alexander Kish, Matthew Varacallo, Amiethab A. Aiyer, and Ettore Vulcano	
<b>85</b>	<b>Metatarsal Fractures</b> . . . . .	<b>393</b>
	Megan R. Wolf and Lauren E. Geaney	
<b>86</b>	<b>Pilon Fractures</b> . . . . .	<b>399</b>
	John Tidwell and Paul Juliano	

<b>87 Achilles Tendon Pathology</b> .....	407
Ryan J. McNeilan and Grant L. Jones	
<b>88 Other Foot Fractures</b> .....	411
Brady W. Rhodes	
<b>89 The Diabetic Foot</b> .....	415
Brad Wills and Michael D. Johnson	
<b>90 Charcot Neuroarthropathy</b> .....	419
Megan N. Severson and Michael D. Johnson	
<b>91 Tarsal Tunnel Syndrome</b> .....	423
Henry C. Hilario	
<b>92 Peroneal Tendon Pathology</b> .....	427
Christopher Arena and Paul Juliano	
<b>93 Adult-Acquired Flat Foot Deformity</b> .....	431
Satheesh K. Ramineni	
<b>94 Plantar Fasciitis</b> .....	435
Andrew E. Hanselman and Robert D. Santrock	
<b>95 Morton's Neuroma</b> .....	439
David Arsanious and Kafai Lai	
<b>96 Foot and Ankle Arthritis</b> .....	443
Megan R. Wolf and Lauren E. Geaney	
 <b>Part IV The Axial Skeleton</b>	
<b>97 Vertebral Disc Disease</b> .....	451
Jeffery Pearson, Thomas E. Niemeier, and Steven M. Theiss	
<b>98 Spondylolysis and Spondylolisthesis</b> .....	455
Hossein Elgafy and Mark Oliver	
<b>99 Spinal Stenosis</b> .....	463
J. Mason DePasse and Alan H. Daniels	
<b>100 Spinal Cord Injury</b> .....	465
Hossein Elgafy and Nathaniel Lempert	
<b>101 Cervical Fracture and Dislocation</b> .....	471
J. Mason DePasse and Alan H. Daniels	
<b>102 Thoracolumbar Fractures</b> .....	475
Scott D. Daffner	
<b>103 Lumbar Strain and Lumbar Disk Herniation</b> .....	481
Ryan Scully and Raj Rao	
<b>104 Adult Spine Deformity</b> .....	487
John France	
<b>105 Tumors of the Spine</b> .....	493
Sean Kraekel and Raj Rao	

<b>106 Infections of the Spine</b> .....	499
Scott D. Daffner	
<b>107 Pelvic Ring Fractures</b> .....	507
James Reagan, Jeffery Kim, and James Day	
<b>108 Acetabular Fractures</b> .....	515
Charles Bishop, Jeffery Kim, and James Day	
<b>Part V Pediatric Orthopedics</b>	
<b>109 Lower Extremity Angular Deformities</b> .....	523
Dominic J. Gargiulo	
<b>110 Principles of Pediatric Fracture Treatment</b> .....	529
LeeAnne Torres, Dana Lycans, and Viorel Raducan	
<b>111 Radial Head Dislocation</b> .....	535
Amit Momaya and Reed Estes	
<b>112 Slipped Capital Femoral Epiphysis</b> .....	537
Viorel Raducan	
<b>113 Developmental Hip Dysplasia</b> .....	541
Viorel Raducan	
<b>114 Congenital Coxa Vara</b> .....	545
Evan Sheppard and Reed Estes	
<b>115 Osteochondropathies of the Knee: Osteochondritis Dissecans and Osgood-Schlatter Disease</b> .....	547
David Cealrey	
<b>116 Osteogenesis Imperfecta</b> .....	553
Evan Sheppard and Reed Estes	
<b>117 Child Abuse</b> .....	557
Susan A. Scherl	
<b>118 Legg-Calve-Perthes</b> .....	565
Evan Sheppard and Reed Estes	
<b>119 Cerebral Palsy</b> .....	569
M. Wade Shrader	
<b>120 Spina Bifida</b> .....	575
Rajiv J. Iyengar, J. Mason DePasse, and Alan H. Daniels	
<b>121 Charcot-Marie-Tooth Disease</b> .....	577
Matthew A. Varacallo	
<b>122 Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy</b> .....	581
David Johannesmeyer and Reed Estes	
<b>123 Arthrogyrosis</b> .....	583
David Johannesmeyer and Reed Estes	

---

<b>124 Achondroplasia</b> .....	587
David Johannesmeyer and Reed Estes	
<b>125 Skeletal Dysplasias</b> .....	591
Dana Olszewski	
<b>126 Chromosomal and Inherited Syndromes</b> .....	593
Howard Y. Park and Anthony A. Scaduto	
<b>127 Juvenile Idiopathic Arthritis</b> .....	597
Amit Momaya and Reed Estes	
<b>128 Shoulder and Elbow Deformities</b> .....	599
Howard Y. Park and Anthony A. Scaduto	
<b>129 Hand and Wrist Deformities</b> .....	601
John M. Stephenson, Allen Borne, and Theresa Wyrick	
<b>130 Genu Varum</b> .....	615
Michael R. Ferrick	
<b>131 Genu Valgum</b> .....	619
Paul Esposito	
<b>132 Lower Extremity Rotational Deformities</b> .....	625
Dominic J. Gargiulo	
<b>133 Limb Deficiency</b> .....	629
Alexander J. Kish	
<b>134 Limb Length Discrepancy (LLD)</b> .....	633
Dominic J. Gargiulo	
<b>135 Pseudarthrosis of the Tibia</b> .....	635
Maegen Wallace	
<b>136 Foot Deformities</b> .....	639
James Reagan and Viorel Raducan	
<b>137 Idiopathic Scoliosis</b> .....	649
Brien Rabenhorst	
<b>138 Neuromuscular Spine Deformity</b> .....	653
John P. Lubicky	
<b>139 Congenital Spinal Anomalies</b> .....	661
Dana Lycans, LeeAnne Torres, and Viorel Raducan	
<b>140 Scheuermann's Kyphosis</b> .....	665
John P. Lubicky	
<b>141 Pediatric Cervical Spine Conditions</b> .....	671
Michael Heffernan and Viral Patel	
<b>142 Pediatric Spondylolysis and Spondylolisthesis</b> .....	689
John P. Lubicky	

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<b>143 Pediatric Spine Trauma</b> .....	697
J. Mason DePasse, Craig P. Ebersson, and Alan H. Daniels	
<b>Part VI Systemic Conditions</b>	
<b>144 Septic Arthritis</b> .....	703
Erik Bowman and Justin Siebler	
<b>145 Osteomyelitis</b> .....	707
Noah Porter and Justin Siebler	
<b>146 Necrotizing Fasciitis</b> .....	711
Justin Siebler and Darin Larson	
<b>147 Rheumatoid Arthritis</b> .....	715
Sylwia Sasinowska and Bobby Kwanghoon Han	
<b>148 Crystalline-Induced Arthropathies</b> .....	719
Jenna Cooley and Bobby Kwanghoon Han	
<b>149 Fibromyalgia</b> .....	725
Chad S. Boomershine	
<b>150 Seronegative Spondyloarthritis</b> .....	729
Aprajita Jagpal, Surabh S. Vinod, and S. Louis Bridges Jr.	
<b>151 Polymyalgia Rheumatica</b> .....	735
Aprajita Jagpal and S. Louis Bridges Jr.	
<b>152 Osteoporosis</b> .....	739
Jonathan M. Karnes and Colleen Watkins	
<b>153 Osteomalacia and Rickets</b> .....	743
Christopher Treager and Carlos Isales	
<b>154 Renal Osteodystrophy</b> .....	749
Phillip A. Bostian and Colleen Watkins	
<b>155 Paget's Disease</b> .....	753
Kevin Shepet and Colleen Watkins	
<b>156 Osteopetrosis</b> .....	757
Michela Rossi, Giulia Battafarano, Domenico Barbuti, and Andrea Del Fattore	
<b>157 Benign Bone Tumors</b> .....	763
Jared L. Harwood and Joel Mayerson	
<b>158 Malignant Bone Tumors</b> .....	773
Jared L. Harwood and Joel Mayerson	
<b>Index</b> .....	783

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**Part I**

**The Basics**

Anne C. Sullivan and Christopher Sugalski

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## Introduction

- Orthopedic surgery encompasses the breadth of surgical and medical management of musculoskeletal injuries and disorders.
- Orthopedic surgeons work closely with a variety of ancillary support staff:
  - Physical and occupational therapists and athletic trainers
  - Physician assistants
  - Nurses and orthopedic/cast techs
- Orthopedics, not unlike other medical specialties, has its own language, with a substantial vocabulary. This makes it particularly important to come to your orthopedic rotation or clerkship prepared.
- There are many definitive and authoritative texts and online sites with which to familiarize oneself with the terminology as well as with the study of orthopedics. For brevity and efficiency, we present the basics here.

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## Subspecialties

### Adult Reconstruction (Joint Replacement/Arthroplasty)

- Expertise in joint replacement, traditionally for management of hip and knee arthritis, includes partial and total hip and knee arthroplasty, as well as revision total hip and knee arthroplasty.
- The need for hip and knee arthroplasty in the United States is projected to increase 174 % and 673 % between 2005 and 2030 [1].
- Replacement of other joints (elbow, ankle, shoulder) often falls to specialists in areas of regional expertise or may be included in arthroplasty practice.

### Trauma

- Expertise in care of complex articular fractures, pelvic fractures, and polytrauma, including sequelae of trauma such as non-union/malunion and infections.
- Most orthopedic surgeons, regardless of specialty, utilize a base of trauma knowledge to care for fractures they encounter while on call.
- Treatments include casting, splinting, open/closed reduction, internal fixation, external fixation, intramedullary nailing, and fracture plating. Trauma surgeons may do variable amounts of arthroplasty and reconstruction.

## Shoulder and Elbow

- Comprehensive surgical treatment of acute and chronic shoulder and elbow conditions.
- Manage rotator cuff tears, shoulder and elbow instability, arthritis, and fractures.
- Utilize both open and arthroscopic surgical techniques.
- May also include shoulder and elbow arthroplasty and complex reconstructive techniques.

## Hand

- A subspecialty shared with both plastic and general surgeons who have completed an additional year of fellowship training in hand surgery
- Concerned with the intricate and vital function of the hand and wrist, including chronic and traumatic conditions
- Surgically manage fractures, instability, arthritis, and nerve compression and have the microsurgical skills to perform digit replantation and various other procedures

## Spine

- Surgically treat acute and chronic neck and back pathology and trauma.
- Often work closely with nonsurgical spine physicians to manage and treat chronic neck and back pain.
- Surgeries include deformity correction for scoliosis, lumbar decompression and fusion, cervical decompression and fusion, and lumbar microdiscectomy.
- Share a scope of practice which overlaps spinal neurosurgeons.

## Foot and Ankle

- Experts in foot and ankle biomechanics and gait.
- Manage complex fractures of the distal tibia, talus, and calcaneus, along with other foot and ankle trauma.

- Manage degenerative conditions and deformities of the foot and ankle, frequently performing ankle, hindfoot, and midfoot fusions or arthroplasty, tendon transfers, and nerve decompression.
- Share a scope of practice that partially overlaps with podiatry.

## Sports Medicine

- Assess and manage injuries and conditions of musculoskeletal pathology encountered in athletes and the active population.
- For arthroscopy specialists, procedures are designed to be minimally invasive to allow the quickest possible return to sport or activity.
- Depending on the population served, sports medicine specialists may also use minimally invasive or cartilage preservation techniques to allow older persons to remain active by addressing early degenerative conditions with less surgical trauma.
- Often focus on the knee and shoulder, tendons, ligaments, and cartilage. Other joint foci are per surgeon preference.
- Nonoperative sports medicine specialists may be family practice physicians, pediatricians, or physical medicine and rehabilitation specialists who have done an additional fellowship (usually 1 year).

## Oncology

- Diagnose and surgically treat musculoskeletal tumors, both benign and malignant.
- Perform a wide variety of procedures ranging from minor open biopsies to hemipelvectomies.
- Frequently perform large tumor resections coupled with limb salvage procedures such as bulk allograft or prosthetic replacement of major joints.

## Pediatrics

- The general orthopedist for the pediatric population.
- Sports injuries, forearm fractures, scoliosis, neuromuscular disorders, and developmental problems such as hip disorders and club foot are among the common conditions seen by pediatric orthopedists.
- Often, pediatric orthopedists will develop a subspecialty niche within general pediatric orthopedics (sports, spine, etc.).

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## General Anatomy and Motion

### Anatomy

- Anterior: front.
- Volar: front, especially referring to the front of the forearm or hand when in anatomic position. This is a convenient reference plane which is fixed relative to the hand, despite rotation of the forearm.
- Posterior: back.
- Dorsal: back, sometimes referring to the thoracic region of the spine but commonly used in hand surgery, referring to the back of the forearm or hand, opposite side of the limb to volar, above. Also, top of the foot.
- Plantar: bottom of the foot (analogous to volar in the hand).
- Medial: toward midline.
- Lateral: away from midline.
- Superior: up.
- Inferior: down.
- Proximal: closer to the center of the body.
- Distal: farther from the center of the body.
- Supra: above.
- Infra: below.
- Intra: within.
- Inter: between.
- Extra: outside of.
- Meta: adjacent or near.
- Retro: reverse or behind.
- Antero: front or forward.
- Mid: middle.

## Postural/Positional or Deformity Descriptions

- Varus: curvature or bowing of a long bone or joint with apex relatively lateral
- Valgus: curvature or bowing of a long bone with apex relatively medial
- Procurvatum: curvature or bowing of a long bone or joint with apex anterior
- Recurvatum: curvature or bowing of a long bone or joint with apex posterior
- Kyphosis: curvature of the spine with apex posterior
- Lordosis: curvature of the spine with apex anterior
- Cavus: high-arched foot
- Equinus: plantar flexed foot or ankle (like a horse that walks on its toes)

### Motion Descriptors

- Elevation: upward movement
- Depression: downward movement
- Anterograde: moving or directed from proximal to distal
- Retrograde: moving or directed from distal to proximal
- Extension: bending movement that increases angle of joint (or fracture site) or moves toward the 180 degree or maximally open position
- Flexion: bending movement that decreases angle of joint (or fracture site) from the maximally open or 180 degree position
- Internal rotation: rotating toward midline
- External rotation: rotating away from midline
- Pronation: turning palm of the hand or arch of the foot down
- Supination: turning palm up or raising the arch of the foot
- Adduction: movement toward midline of the body or limb
- Abduction: movement away from midline of the body or limb
- Eccentric: muscle lengthening against resistive force

- Concentric: muscle shortening against resistive force
- Isometric: muscle contraction without a change in length

## Bone Growth and Anatomy

- Epiphysis: end of bone closest to joint.
- Metaphysis: the portion of a long bone between the physis or physal scar and the diaphysis, seen as the “flared” portion of the bone, largely cancellous in structure.
- Diaphysis: the shaft of a long bone.
- Trochanter: a large protruding knob of bone, specifically at the proximal extent of the shaft of the femur.
- Tuberosity: a medium-sized normal knob or protrusion of bone, often serves as a tendon attachment.
- Tubercle: a smaller knob of bone, often a tendon attachment.
- Malleolus: a moderate sized knob of bone, specifically on the medial and lateral sides of the ankle.
- Sesamoid: a relatively small bone which is largely contained within a tendon and serves to enhance tendon function. The patella is the largest sesamoid bone and the sesamoid bones of the hand are variably present.
- Facet: a relatively small and flat cartilage-covered surface of a bone, one of the gliding surfaces of the joint in focus.
- Foramen: a normal hole in a bone, through which a traversing structure, such as a nerve or blood vessel, passes.
- Canal: a longer tunnel or hole through a bone.
- Medulla: central portion of a structure, often relatively soft and protected by some surrounding resilient structure.

## Bone Types

- Woven: immature, disorganized bone deposition
- Lamellar: mature, organized bone deposition, having layered histologic appearance

- Cortical: strong, compact, outer layer, usually lamellar
  - Layers (lamellae) of bone surrounding multiple central canaliculi (channels) which allow communication between osteocytes.
  - Haversian unit is the (histologic) canaliculus surrounded by a set of lamellae of cortical bone.
- Cancellous: porous, spongy inner core of bone consisting of interconnected trabeculae

## Bone Cells

- Osteoblasts: form bone and regulate bone metabolism
- Osteocytes: mature bone cells surrounded by osteoid matrix
- Osteoclasts: macrophage-like cells responsible for bone resorption and turnover

## Bone Growth and Healing

- Intramembranous ossification
  - Bone forms without cartilage intermediary.
- Endochondral ossification
  - Initial cartilage model is replaced by woven bone and then remodeled to lamellar bone.
  - Replicated in fracture healing.
- Physis: Growth plate. Site of bone growth
  - Organized into zones
    - Reserve
    - Proliferative
    - Hypertrophic
    - Bone deposition
  - Physal Scar: a variable anatomic landmark which marks the position of the physis in mature bone after it is fused and no longer growing
  - Generally located transversely at the point of maximum width of each end of the bone
- Fracture healing
  - Primary healing
    - Rigid fixation/absolute stability without fracture gap

- Facilitated by lag screw fixation or compression plates
- Intramembranous, direct bone healing without callous via Haversian remodeling
- Secondary fracture healing
  - Less rigid fixation/relative stability.
  - Seen after application of a cast, intramedullary nail, external fixator, or bridge plating.
  - Stages as below with cartilage model:
    - Blood clot and hematoma
    - Callus (cartilage)
    - Woven, immature bone
    - Remodeling to lamellar, compact, and mature bone
  - Optimal fracture healing produces bone that is identical to the original tissue in histology and biomechanics.
  - Bone healing is true healing, not scar formation.
- Orthopedic patients are at an increased risk for VTE in the perioperative period
  - Virchow's triad: stasis, endothelial injury, and hypercoagulability
- Often prescribed medications to decrease their risk of VTE
  - Risk of VTE has been weighed against the risk of bleeding while taking these medications.
- Sequential compression devices (SCDs) decrease stasis by actively promoting venous return from the distal limb and may decrease the need for pharmacologic VTE prophylaxis.
- Heparin
  - Activates antithrombin III which inactivates thrombin, factor Xa
  - 5000 units SQ TID to prevent VTE
- Enoxaparin (Lovenox, low-molecular-weight heparin, LMWH)
  - Same mechanism of action of heparin, more predictable anticoagulant effects
  - 30 mg SQ BID or 40 mg qday
  - Generally the preferred method of anticoagulation for patients at significant VTE risk
- Warfarin
  - Inhibits vitamin K-dependent factors II, VII, IX, X, protein C, and protein S.
  - International normalized ratio (INR) must be monitored.
  - Used when long-term anticoagulation is required.
- Aspirin (ASA)
  - Irreversibly binds to cyclooxygenase (COX), decreasing prostaglandin and thromboxane synthesis and platelet aggregation
    - Fondaparinux (Arixtra)
    - Related to LMWH, injected
  - Activates antithrombin III to inhibit factor Xa
- Newer oral anticoagulants:
  - Do not require coagulation monitoring
  - Limited orthopedic indications currently in US, some bleeding concerns
  - Rivaroxaban (Xarelto); apixaban (Eliquis)
    - Direct factor Xa inhibitors
  - Dabigatran (Pradaxa)
    - Direct thrombin inhibitor

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## Cartilage

### Hyaline Cartilage

- Covers smooth articular surfaces.
- Proteoglycans retain water and provide resistance against compression.
- Type II collagen.
- Chondrocytes.

### Fibrocartilage

- Menisci, labrum, annulus fibrosus, and pubic symphysis
- Proteoglycans and water
- Type I collagen
- Chondrocytes

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## Pharmacology

### Anticoagulation

- Venous thromboembolism (VTE) = blood clot
  - Deep venous thrombosis (DVT)
  - Pulmonary embolism (PE)

## Antibiotics

- Ancef/cefazolin, first-generation cephalosporin
  - Typical pre-/postoperative antibiotic utilized during orthopedic surgical procedures and in open fractures
  - Blocks cell wall synthesis, modest activity against gram-negative organisms
- Clindamycin
  - Utilized in cases of penicillin or cephalosporin allergy
  - Interferes with function of 50S ribosomal subunit and subsequent protein synthesis
- Vancomycin
  - Indicated when methicillin-resistant *Staph aureus* (MRSA) is suspected
- Aminoglycosides
  - Gentamycin, tobramycin
  - Added in more severe open fractures, grade III, for synergistic effects and gram-negative coverage
- Penicillins
  - Added in farm injuries or if there is concern for anaerobic organisms such as clostridium

## NSAIDs (nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs)

- Ibuprofen, naproxen, meloxicam, and others  
Inhibit COX1/2 decreasing inflammation and platelet aggregation
- Celebrex  
Inhibit COX2 selectively  
Spare gastrointestinal side effects (bleeding) and decreases platelet effect

## Bisphosphonates

- Inhibit osteoclast bone resorption
- Nitrogen containing bisphosphonates
  - Inhibit farnesyl pyrophosphate synthase
  - Disrupt function of ruffled border and osteoclast ability to resorb bone
- Primarily utilized in treatment of osteoporosis
- Also indicated in other conditions such as metastasis to bone and Paget's disease

## Orthopedic Implants

### Screws

- Cortical screws
  - Utilized for hard cortical bone
  - Less thread required for equal pullout strength
- Cancellous screws
  - Increased thread depth theoretically increases pullout strength in weaker, less dense cancellous bone; wider spaced threads so thread number is compromised.
- Lag screws
  - Threads only engage the far cortex/aspect of the fracture. This allows the near side to slide and compress across the fracture site.
  - Can be by:
    - Design: base of screw does not have threads.
    - Technique: fully threaded screw, but near cortex is overdrilled to the outer diameter of the screw, to prevent thread engagement in the near cortex and pull the far cortex in to compress the fracture line.
- Locking screws
  - Head of the screw locks into the plate.
  - Provides an “internal fixator,” fixed angle device.
  - Utilized for osteoporotic bone, comminuted fractures, and other situations with compromised bone quality.
- Cannulated screws
  - Central core of screw is hollow.
  - Screw is placed over a wire, allowing for fine-tuning of trajectory.
  - Not as strong as similar-sized solid core screws.

### Intramedullary Nails

- Placed within long bone for treatment of fracture or, less commonly, prevention of impending pathologic fracture due to weakened bone
- Commonly utilized for the femur and tibia
- Also available for the humerus, radius, ulna, clavicle, and fibula



## External Fixator

- Pins are placed into bone and left protruding external to skin:
  - Can cause irritation or be portal for infection
  - Connected to an external frame providing stability across a fracture or unstable joint
- Often utilized as a temporizing measure in polytrauma or when the soft tissue is not amenable to internal fixation, as in the case of massive soft tissue injury or open wounds
- Can be utilized as definitive fixation until fracture healing or for definitive correction of limb deformity

## Percutaneous Pins

- Threaded or smooth pins, placed through skin and across fractures or joints to provide either temporary or permanent fixation
- Can be left protruding outside the skin for ease of later removal
- Can cause irritation, or be portal for infection, especially if placed through abundant, mobile soft tissue

## Arthroplasty

- Joint replacement or resurfacing aims to preserve motion and reduce pain at a joint that has been damaged by trauma or degenerative disease.
- Commonly performed for the knee, hip, shoulder, ankle, and elbow utilizing metal, polyethylene, and/or ceramic implants.
- Hemiarthroplasty refers to the replacement of the ball of the hip or shoulder with preservation of the native socket.
- Unicompartmental arthroplasty is a partial (knee) replacement, which resurfaces the femur and the tibia on only the medial or lateral side of joint. Reserved for cases when degenerative changes are isolated to one compartment.
- Total joint arthroplasty refers to replacement of both sides of the articular surface.
- Resurfacing arthroplasty is less common and replaces surface of joint with minimal intra-medullary fixation.

- Metal, polyethylene, silicone, and soft tissue interposition arthroplasty are often utilized for the hand and wrist.
- Disc replacement is performed for degenerative disc disease in the cervical and lumbar spine.

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## Miscellaneous

- Autograft: tissue transferred from self to repair damage tissue such as tendon, ligament, or bone.
- Allograft: cadaver tissue.
- Arthrocentesis: aspiration of a joint.
- Arthrodesis: joint fusion.
- Arthroscopy: minimally invasive surgery where cameras are utilized to visualize and perform intra-articular surgery.
- Bursa: synovial tissue sac that reduces friction between two surfaces.
- Crepitus: grating, grinding, and popping caused by friction from the bone, cartilage, or other soft tissues.
- Curettage: scrape out.
- Dislocation: disruption of normal relationship of bones meeting in a joint, usually requiring significant trauma and soft tissue disruption, often maintained in abnormal position by geometry of the joint and spasm of surrounding muscles. Interposed tissue may prevent reduction.
- Effusion: increase in joint swelling or fluid.
- Fascia: fibrous tissue separating the subcutaneous layer from the deep muscular layer. Also separates muscular compartments.
- Fluoroscopy: live X-ray imaging.
- Fracture: broken bone. May or may not be visible on X-ray.
- Iatrogenic fracture: unintentional fracture caused by event in the course of treatment.
- Lavage: irrigation and washing.
- Malunion: improperly healed fracture.
- Nonunion: failure of fracture healing.
- Occult fracture: not readily visible on X-ray.
- Open fracture: fracture which communicates with a break in skin that allows physical continuity between fracture and the outside environment, presumed contaminated with bacteria.

- Osteotomy: cutting of bone.
- Paresthesia: altered sensation.
- Pathologic fracture: fracture caused by weakened bone.
- Reduce: restore normal alignment and position of a structure, such as a bone or joint that has been disrupted by injury.
- Sprain: ligament injury.
- Strain: muscle injury.
- Stress fracture: repetitive use injury causing microfractures to bone with resultant pain. May lead to a true displaced fracture if weakened bone is overloaded.
- Subluxation: incomplete joint dislocation.

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## Types (Modalities) of Musculoskeletal Imaging

- Plain X-ray = radiograph = roentgenogram = plain film, in common use “X-ray” or “film”
  - Standard, two-dimensional image, generated when X-rays travel through a substance (tissue) and are variably absorbed, reflected, or transmitted by the tissue to a receiving plate of unexposed photographic film, or digitally recorded by a fluorescent receiving grid.
  - Views: AP (or PA), lateral, and oblique; views correspond to the projection of (the shadow of) the structure, relative to anatomic position, against the receiving device; special named or anatomic views may provide specialized anatomic information to help understand the pathology more specifically for surgical planning.
- Ultrasound = sonogram = sonographic image
  - Image generated by the relative transmission versus reflection of high-frequency sound energy as it travels through tissues, related to tissue density; the reflected waves are received by a transducer and electronically interpreted to produce an image.
  - Musculoskeletal ultrasound is improving in quality and finding new applications, for example, in assessing integrity of tendons and other structures, as well as providing guidance for percutaneous procedures.
- Nuclear medicine scan = radioisotope-labeled scan, may also be named isotope, e.g., indium-111 or technetium-99
  - Image created by measurement of radioisotope labeling:
    - A substance or cell used by the body is radiolabeled and injected into the circulation, allowing the isotope to pass through the circulation and be metabolized, concentrating in areas which accumulate more of the radiolabeled substance.
    - The whole body or region of interest is then imaged by a radiation receiver (essentially a Geiger counter), and areas of isotope concentration are recorded, formatted to produce an image, and

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- interpreted in the context of the clinical situation.
- Reliability and resolution are variable, often used for screening or confirmation of diagnosis, in conjunction with other modalities.
  - Computed (axial) tomography images = CT scan = CAT scan
    - Three-dimensional imaging technology involving X-rays transmitted from a source revolving around the body or structure and striking a revolving receiver that is 180 degrees opposed.
    - This data is then reformatted to generate complementary series of high-resolution thin slice/section images of the structure or region of interest for diagnosis and treatment decision-making.
    - Views: axial, coronal, sagittal, and special anatomic reconstruction.
    - Three-dimensional CT reconstructions may be very detailed and may be used to pattern physical models for surgical planning.
  - Magnetic resonance imaging = MRI
    - High-resolution three-dimensional imaging generated by the signal generated by the excitation and relaxation of protons of water molecules in response to perturbations of their alignment in a high-strength magnetic field (pulse sequences). The signal generated by the protons in the changing field is characteristic to the tissue and its water content and is used to generate a high-resolution gray-scale image of the structure being imaged. MRI scanners come in different magnet field strengths measured in teslas or T, usually between 0.5 T and 3.0 T. They also come in varying sizes, including open and wide bore. Higher-tesla magnets typically result in higher-resolution images.
    - MR images are well suited to visualize soft tissues and soft tissue pathologic processes, as well as subtle changes in bone marrow.
    - Planes of reconstruction: axial, coronal, sagittal, special anatomic (e.g., longitudinal or radial with respect to an axis), or

three-dimensional reconstruction, similar to CT scanning.

- Different pulse sequences of excitation-relaxation cycles produce different characteristic signal patterns which are contrasted and compared to identify pathologic processes:
  - T1 sequences can be identified by fatty tissues showing bright or white signal and water showing dark signal representation, particularly useful for visualizing fine anatomic detail.
  - T2 sequences are identified by water showing bright signal and fat showing dark signal, useful for demonstrating edema and related pathologic processes.
  - “Fat suppression” and other advanced pulse sequences enhance visualization of various tissue characteristics.

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## Types/Patterns of Fractures

- Fracture – break in the bone.
- Closed fracture – fracture in which the skin is intact.
- Open fracture – fracture in which the zone of injury communicates with a break or laceration of the skin or mucosa (anus, vagina), exposing the broken bone to air and potential bacterial contamination.
  - Gustilo classification:
    - Grade 1 – relatively low-energy injury; the skin wound is 1 cm or less, often an inside-out injury resulting from piercing of the skin by a spike of bone.
    - Grade 2 – moderate injury fracture with wound <10 cm and no neurovascular compromise, minimal accompanying deep soft tissue damage, and the ability to close the defect with local tissues.
    - Grade 3 – more severe open fracture with major soft tissue damage, characterized by wound >10 cm in length or similar soft tissue compromise:
      - 3a no neurovascular injury, local soft tissue coverage possible without flap
      - 3b flap coverage required
      - 3c (neuro)vascular injury requiring immediate repair/reconstruction

- Stress fracture = fatigue fracture = fracture that is the result of repetitive stress (fatigue) over time, which exceeds the bone's ability to heal and therefore results in cycle of partial healing and repeated cumulative injury and weakened bone.
  - Often not visible on plain film or may be visible as incomplete fracture or sclerotic incomplete healing response.
  - The “dreaded black line” is a radiographic appearance of a radiolucent line surrounded by sclerotic callus, representing a stress fracture which may complete in the near future.
  - May eventually become complete fracture.
- Torus/buckle fracture – incomplete fracture with a buckling of the cortex, no obvious fracture “line” through the cortex, usually in pediatric/immature bone which is relatively flexible.
- Greenstick fracture – incomplete, angulated fracture. Break in outer cortex (tension side), with the inner cortex intact or showing plastic deformation, usually in pediatric/immature, or sometimes pathologic bone which is relatively flexible.
- Compression fracture is structural failure of bone under compressive load, often resulting in decreased volume of bone, common in osteoporotic or compromised bone, especially in areas that are mostly cancellous (vertebral body).
- Burst fracture (vertebrae) is fracture occurring under compressive load, in which the bone is resilient enough to partially resist the load and ultimately fail in a propulsive manner, resulting in the fracture fragment propulsion approximately 90 degrees to the direction of the load.
- Stable fracture is fracture configuration that remains anatomically aligned and resists displacement under normal physiologic load in a normal loading direction and may often be treated nonoperatively with external bracing or support.
- Pathologic fracture – any fracture occurring under normal physiologic load, indicative of abnormality of bone strength, or other compromise. Common causes include destructive lesion of bone such as metastasis or infection, metabolic bone disease such as osteoporosis, or genetic abnormality.
- Common eponyms
  - *Bennett* fracture is an unstable fracture of the base of the first metacarpal.
  - *Colles* fracture – a distal radius fracture with apex pointing volar.
  - *Charcot* fracture or joint (neuropathic arthropathy) is a destructive process due to neuropathy; lack of protective sensation impairs the ability of the structure to resist harmful loading and heal micro- or macro-injuries, leading to catastrophic failure.
  - *Galeazzi* fracture is a forearm fracture consisting of radial fracture and dislocation of the distal radial ulnar joint (DRUJ).
  - *Lisfranc* joint is the tarso-metatarsal joint, named for the Napoleonic era surgeon who described (eponymously named) fracture dislocation injuries to this area.
  - *Maisonneuve* fracture (complex) is a pronation-external rotation injury to the ankle syndesmosis, which disrupts the entire length of the interosseous (tibiofibular) membrane and produces an oblique or spiral fracture of the proximal fibula, usually requiring operative stabilization at the ankle mortise. The fibular fracture heals secondarily.
  - *Monteggia* fracture is a forearm and elbow injury involving an ulno-humeral dislocation, and usually radial forearm injury requires imaging of the elbow and wrist to look for associated injury.
  - *Jones* fracture is an acute or chronic or completed stress fracture of the proximal end of the fifth metatarsal, at the watershed area of blood supply in the meta-diaphyseal region of the bone.

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### Steps to Reading Musculoskeletal Imaging from an Orthopedic Perspective

- Name the imaging modality, and view(s) or plane represented, if cross-sectional imaging.
- Name the skeletal region, joint, bone, or region of bone (e.g., proximal or distal portion of long bone), which is represented in the image, and laterality if appropriate.

- Describe the skeletal maturity: if able to be determined:
  - “This is an AP view plain film of the right shoulder of a skeletally mature individual.”
  - “These are AP and frog-leg lateral views of the pelvis of a skeletally immature individual.”
- (Optional) describe any technique details if appropriate: image quality, completeness, and sequence type (T1- or T2-type sequences):
  - “These are T1-weighted axial images of the right knee.”
  - “This is a swimmer’s view lateral c-spine film which appears underpenetrated and the C7–T1 junction is not visible.”
- Begin to list pathologic findings:
  - Special appearance or characteristics of bone or bone quality, even if unable to completely characterize them:
    - Osteopenia – decreased density, darker on plain film
    - Sclerosis – increased density, whiter on plain film
    - Calcifications – represented by white appearance which may be irregular or correspond to a known structure
    - Callus – bone deposition at fracture site
    - Other obvious deformities or abnormalities
  - Beware of general appearance/expectations of appropriate penetration for analog films or appropriate contrast window in digital films.
  - Tip: If the bone looks clearly abnormal, note it; start by stating that the bone looks abnormal; if more details are possible (e.g., osteopenia, subtle bone destruction due to other pathologic processes), think about it, as you may be asked.
  - Special characteristics of soft tissue:
    - Foreign bodies such as gravel or glass.
    - Disruption of or air in tissues, which can indicate either open wound or gas production by an organism.
    - Calcification or ossification may be subtle difference.
    - Edema (extra-articular swelling).
    - Effusion – intra-articular swelling.
  - Soft tissue envelope may be notable for its dimensions.
- Presence of implants/hardware or foreign bodies:
  - A radiopaque implant or replacement prosthesis is best described as “hardware” initially; further description may be given, e.g., a plate, prosthesis, or screw, if needed. Describing hardware incorrectly may be an unnecessary source of embarrassment!
  - Tip: Avoid overstating – it is safest to “under call” it and state that, for example, “a hip prosthesis is present,” unless you are sure whether a hip arthroplasty is a “total hip” with a femoral stem with a small femoral head and a hemispheric metallic or polyethylene acetabular component or a “hemiarthroplasty” if there is a large spherical prosthetic head which fills the native acetabulum.
  - Tip: Beware of objects external to the body which may appear on X-rays such as coins in a pocket, body piercings, zippers or buckles, jewelry, EKG leads or monitors, external bracing or bandaging, and foreign bodies, e.g., gravel in a wound.
- Traumatic or focal findings:
  - Fractures – see below for how to describe.
  - Subluxations and dislocations.
  - Malunions, deformities, and malalignments.
  - More subtle deformities and lesions of bone, joint, or soft tissue.
  - Other soft tissue defects or lesions.
- How to describe a fracture:
  - State brief demographics of patient: gender and age.
  - One or two noteworthy facts if known, e.g., mechanism of injury, significant history, or comorbidities.
- Name the bone that is fractured and if it is open or closed.
- Name the approximate direction and configuration of the fracture line(s):

- Name the region of the bone where the fracture is located:
  - Is the fracture articular (the fracture line enters a joint) or non-articular?
  - Is it a physal fracture (does the fracture line communicate with a physis)?
- Note the characteristics of fracture pattern:
  - Displacement, bone loss, angulation, and shortening if present.
  - State the direction of the APEX if angulated, on both AP and lateral view.
  - Note the fracture pattern: transverse, long or short oblique, spiral, or comminuted.
  - Note if segmental – more than two major fragments along length of bone.
- “These are AP and lateral view X-rays of the distal radius and ulna (or wrist) of a skeletally immature individual. There is a complete, transverse, non-articular fracture of the distal radius with apex volar angulation. The fracture line involves the distal radial physis.”
- Bonus: If it is a physal fracture, which type is it per the Salter-Harris classification?
  - I. Nondisplaced disruption of the physis itself.
  - II. The fracture line involved the physis, where there is displacement, and the fracture line exits through the metaphysis, so that a small portion of the metaphysis, known as the “Thurstan-Holland fragment,” remains attached to the physal fragment.
  - III. The fracture is articular, and the fracture line is actually through the epiphysis, but not the metaphysis.
  - IV. The fracture line travels through the metaphysis, crosses the physis, and continues through the epiphysis to exit into the joint.
  - V. The fracture line is not visible and the physis is impacted.

A \_\_ Y.O. [male/female] with a [open/closed] fracture of [which bone].

The fracture is an [intra-articular/extra-articular].

[spiral/oblique/transverse/greenstick/buckle/segmental/comminuted]

fracture of the [proximal third/middle third/distal third/ \_\_ cm from the joint].

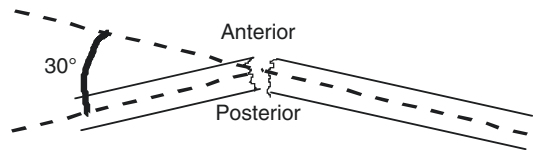
On the AP view, the fracture is angulated \_\_ degrees apex [medial/lateral].

On the lateral view, there is \_\_ degrees of angulation apex [anterior/posterior].

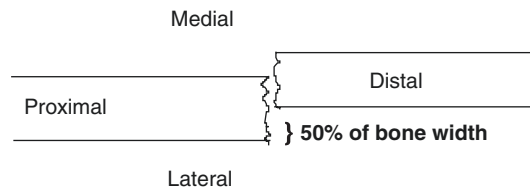
On the AP view, the fracture is displaced \_\_ percent [medially/laterally] [with \_\_ cm of shortening].

On the lateral view, the fracture is displaced \_\_ percent [anterior/posterior] [with \_\_ cm of shortening].

Angulation: the angle described by drawing a line through the center of fracture fragments, i.e., 30° apex anterior (pictured below).



Displacement: described in terms of percent of bone width, where the distal fragment is shifted with respect to the proximal fragment, i.e., the distal fragment is 50% displaced medially.



## Example

### How to Describe a Fracture

Used with permission from D. Daniel Rotenberg, M.D.

### Suggested Readings

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## Bone Composition [4]

- Bone consists of cells and a blend of mineral and matrix that coexist in a very exact relationship. The matrix phase consists of collagen and glycosaminoglycans.
- Calcium hydroxyapatite is the basic mineral crystal in bone. The bulk of calcium in the skeletal reservoir is bound in the crystals of hydroxyapatite. The organic component of the bone matrix, primarily type I collagen, contributes to bone strength.
- Osteoblasts are bone-forming cells that secrete the matrix components. As ossification occurs, the osteoblasts become trapped in the matrix they produce and are then referred to as osteocytes.
- Osteocytes represent terminally differentiated osteoblasts and function within syncytial networks to support bone structure and metabolism.
- Osteoclasts are the only cells that are known to be capable of resorbing bone. Their primary function is the degradation and removal of mineralized bone. They are derived from mononuclear precursor cells of the monocyte-macrophage lineage.

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## Anatomy [3]

- Microscopically, bone is described as either mature or immature.
- Mature bone has an ordered lamellar arrangement of haversian systems or osteons and canalicular communications.
- Immature bone has much more random appearance of collagen in a matrix with irregularly spaced cells. Immature bone is seen in the adult skeleton only under pathologic conditions like fracture callus or osteogenic sarcoma.
- Macroscopically, the lamellar bone is configured either as dense cortical bone or as spicules called trabeculae.
- Cortical bone is dense and solid and surrounds the marrow space, whereas trabecular bone is composed of a honeycomb-like network of trabecular plates and rods interspersed within the bone marrow compartment.
- Cortical bone has an outer periosteal surface and inner endosteal surface. Periosteal surface activity is important for appositional growth and fracture repair.
- Both cortical and trabecular bone are composed of haversian systems. Cortical and trabecular bone are normally formed in a lamellar pattern, in which collagen fibrils are laid down in alternating orientations.
- The normal lamellar pattern is absent in woven bone.

- The periosteum is a fibrous connective tissue sheath that surrounds the outer cortical surface of bone, except at joints where bone is lined by articular cartilage.
- The periosteum is tightly attached to the outer cortical surface of the bone by thick collagenous fibers called Sharpey's fibers.
- The endosteum is a membranous structure covering the inner surface of cortical bone, trabecular bone, and Volkmann's canal present in the bone. The endosteum contains blood vessels, osteoblasts, and osteoclasts.
- Fracture healing is classically categorized into two types: direct bone healing and secondary bone healing.
- Direct bone healing refers to direct cortical healing of two fractured ends of a bone. There is no transitional cartilaginous stage. This process primarily occurs between rigidly opposed cortical fracture ends.
- Secondary bone healing involves healing processes within the bone marrow, periosteum, and the soft tissues surrounding the bone. A transitional cartilaginous or fibrocartilaginous stage precedes bone formation. This type of healing dominates when the fracture is held less rigidly, like seen when a fracture is treated with a cast.

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### **Vascularity [1]**

- The vascularity of bone is very important when it comes to fracture repair.
- In an intact adult long bone, there are three major sources of blood.
- The nutrient artery enters the cortical diaphysis and divides proximally and distally within the endosteal canal.
- Smaller metaphyseal arteries enter the bone near its ends. These arteries supply the metaphyseal region and form an anastomotic system with the endosteal blood supply coming from the nutrient artery.
- The bone is also perfused by small vessels from the periosteum that are adherent to the outer surface of the bone.
- The endosteal circulation perfuses approximately the inner two-thirds of the cortex. Most of the metaphyseal bone is also perfused by the endosteal circulation rising from the metaphyseal arteries.
- The outer one-third of the cortex is perfused by the periosteal vasculature.
- Direct bone healing occurs primarily after the fractured ends of cortical bone are directly reduced and rigidly opposed under compression. Rigid compression fixation of the opposed cortical ends creates a mechanical environment with minimal interfragmentary motion.
- Direct appositional bone healing must occur across the gaps before contact healing can proceed. However, on a microscopic scale, perfect apposition of the fractured cortices is not achieved. Cortical ends are connected with a series of contact points and gaps.
- Gap healing is primarily characterized by direct bone formation between the ends of the bone, thus enclosing the gap. Smaller gaps fill with mature lamellar bone. Larger gaps fill more slowly primarily with primitive woven bone.
- These gaps that have filled with primitive woven bone during the initial phase of gap healing require remodeling to achieve pre-fracture strength, which is achieved by contact healing.

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### **Bone Healing [2]**

- The primary goal of fracture healing is to reestablish the integrity of the injured bone, restoring function of the affected limb.
- Contact healing occurs in a series of events controlled by basic multicellular units. They facilitate bone resorption and then direct formation in the tunnels spanning the fracture. These multicellular components form a cutting cone with osteoclast leading the path.

- The cutting cones burrow through the fracture cortices and across the fracture plane, creating a void. Osteoblasts then follow along the edges of the cutting cone and begin bone formation.
- Fractures treated by closed methods, intramedullary fixation, external fixation, or less than rigid plate unite by secondary bone healing.
- The fracture causes localized bleeding with formation of a hematoma. This initiates a set of inflammatory events.
- Secondary bone healing employs a combination of direct intramembranous bone formation and endochondral ossification, similar to bone formation processes seen in skeletal growth.
- In both mechanisms, mesenchymal cells migrate to the wound site in response to locally increased levels of growth factors and cytokines, where they differentiate into chondrocytes or osteoblasts. The mechanical environment influences this cell fate decision.
- Secondary bone healing initially produces primary woven bone. Following the initial repair, remodeling transforms the primitive woven bone into a more efficient secondary structure which restores the bony architecture to its normal state.
- The fracture includes injury not only to the osseous structures but also to the marrow elements, periosteum, and soft tissue surrounding the bone.
- These structures are all well vascularized in comparison with bone, and disruption of their vascular supplies leads to the accumulation of hematoma.
- Local cell death accompanies the damage to the vascular elements. The hematoma and necrotic tissue elicit an immune response that attracts cellular elements through chemotaxis.
- The process of chemotaxis gives rise to primitive mesenchymal elements that then begin to accumulate in the area of the fracture.
- The inflammatory response has two beneficial effects, hydraulic splinting of the limb and voluntary immobilization from pain and swelling, and mesenchymal cells proliferate and differentiate into osteoblasts.

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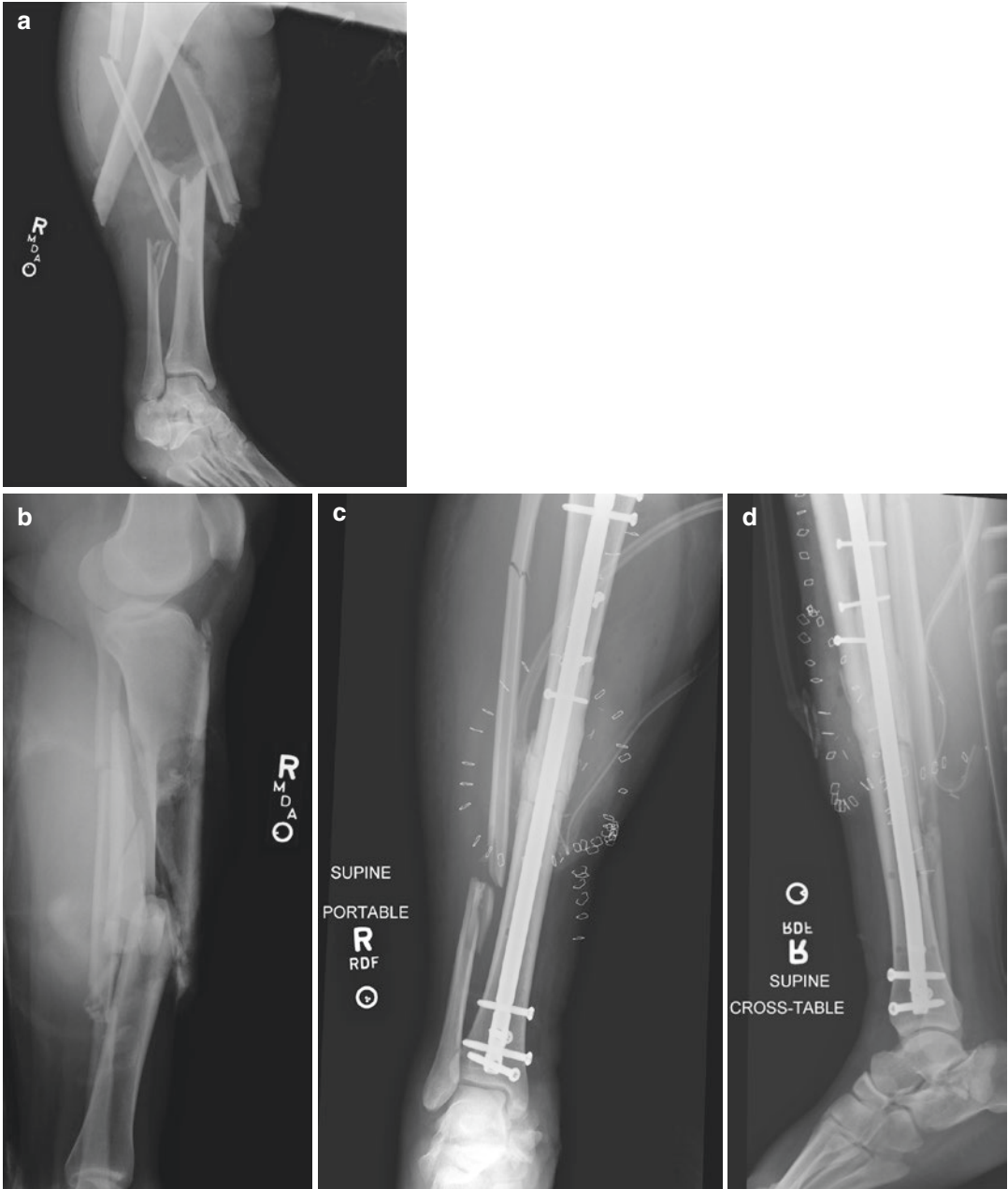
### Reparative Phase [4]

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### Inflammatory Phase [4]

- Fracture healing is a natural process that can reconstitute injured tissue and recover its original function and form.
- It is a very complex process that involved the coordinated participation of migration, differentiation, and proliferation of inflammatory cells, angioblasts, fibroblasts, chondroblasts, and osteoblasts which synthesize and release bioactive substance of extracellular matrix components.
- The inflammatory phase occurs shortly after a bone is fractured.
- The reparative phase of fracture healing is marked by changes in the microenvironment of the fracture itself.
- Changes in oxygen tension and acidity of the microenvironment lead to differentiation of the primitive mesenchymal cells into more differentiated cellular elements.
- These pluripotential mesenchymal cells differentiate into a variety of cell types. Granulation tissue develops, bringing with it new blood supply into the area of the fracture.
- Islands of cartilage formation are evident which eventually undergoes endochondral ossification as the fracture unites.
- Damage to the periosteum activates the cambium layer of the periosteum, and some new bone formation occurs.
- Altogether these changes are referred to as callus formation. Once callus is observed to be bridging the fracture site, the bone fragments are usually stable.

- As the callus matures, it is remodeled to its normal configuration. In this process, the newly formed bone in the area of the fracture undergoes osteoclastic resorption and osteoblastic deposition of mature lamellar bone (Fig. 3.1).



**Fig. 3.1** (a, b) Show orthogonal views of a comminuted and displaced open tibial shaft fracture. (c, d) Reveal the same injury after reconstruction with interfragmentary screws and a tibial nail

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