

# Treatment of Chronic Mandibular Dislocations: A Comparison Between Eminectomy and Miniplates

Belmiro Cavalcanti do Egito Vasconcelos, DDS, PhD,\* and  
Gabriela Granja Porto, DDS, MSc†

**Purpose:** Temporomandibular joint dislocation is defined as an excessive forward movement of the condyle beyond the articular eminence with complete separation of the articular surfaces and fixation in that position. The purpose of this study was to compare 2 types of treatment for chronic mandibular dislocations, eminectomy and miniplates, evaluate the results of these surgeries, and make a critical review of the literature.

**Patients and Methods:** The sample was obtained from the records of Oswaldo Cruz Hospital (Recife, Brazil) and comprised cases submitted to chronic mandibular dislocation treatment by eminectomy and by use of miniplates between 2000 and 2006. Preoperative and postoperative assessment included a thorough history and physical examination to determine the maximal mouth opening, presence of pain and sounds, frequency of dislocations, recurrence rate, and presence of facial nerve paralysis.

**Results:** After eminectomy, the mean maximal mouth opening was  $48.4 \pm 8.5$  mm preoperatively and  $41.3 \pm 5.0$  mm postoperatively. After the use of miniplates, it was  $42.75 \pm 11.53$  and  $45.62 \pm 8.52$  mm, respectively. There was no facial nerve paralysis after either treatment. Recurrence occurred with miniplates (11.11%) but not with eminectomy.

**Conclusion:** Eminectomy had less chance of recurrence without creating articular damage, and with miniplates, the chance of recurrence increased because there is always the possibility of the miniplate fracturing.

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Temporomandibular joint (TMJ) dislocation is defined as an excessive forward movement of the condyle beyond the articular eminence with complete separation of the articular surfaces and fixation in that position.<sup>1,2</sup> It is commonly associated with poor development of the articular fossa, laxity of the temporomandibular liga-

ment or joint capsule, and excessive activity of the lateral pterygoid and infrahyoid muscles due to drug use or disease.<sup>1,2</sup>

A variety of therapeutic approaches designed to limit the forward excursion of the condylar head have been applied, such as intracapsular injection of sclerosing solutions,<sup>3</sup> intramuscular injection of botulinum toxin type A,<sup>4</sup> lateral pterygoid myotomy,<sup>5</sup> scarification of the temporalis tendon,<sup>6</sup> and bone grafting augmentation or application of a well-designed alloplastic impediment with vitallium mesh or titanium plates.<sup>3,7</sup> Another type of treatment is reduction of the eminence, thereby permitting free movement of the condyle.<sup>7</sup> Each form of treatment has its own advantages and disadvantages.

The aim of this study is to compare 2 techniques used for the treatment of chronic mandibular dislocation: eminectomy and miniplates. A descriptive statistical analysis is also presented, as well as a critical review of the literature stating and discussing the advantages and disadvantages of each type of treatment.

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Received from the University of Pernambuco, Recife, Brazil.

\*Senior Lecturer, Department of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery, and Director, Master's and PhD Programs in Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery.

†Postgraduate Student, PhD Program in Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery.

Address correspondence and reprint requests to Dr Vasconcelos: Faculdade de Odontologia de Pernambuco, Departamento de Cirurgia e Traumatologia BMF, Av General Newton Cavalcanti, 1650 Camaragibe PE, Brazil; e-mail: belmiro@pesquisador.cnpq.br

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## Patients and Methods

A retrospective evaluation of 10 patients treated by eminectomy and 8 treated by use of miniplates with chronic mandibular dislocations was conducted at the Division of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery, Oswaldo Cruz Hospital–University of Pernambuco, Recife, Brazil, between 2000 and 2006.

The following criteria were used for inclusion in the study: at least 5 episodes of dislocation per month; inability to perform jaw movements to smile, speak, or eat; and failure of conservative treatment methods, such as orientation to self-limit jaw movements and the use of a chin cup.

Radiographic examination included panoramic radiographs and conventional tomography to determine the height of the articular eminence. Preoperative assessment included a thorough history and physical examination to determine the maximal mouth opening (MMO) and frequency of dislocations; in addition, the patient's age and gender were recorded. The patients were preoperatively and postoperatively examined and classified according to the grading system of House and Brackmann<sup>8</sup> to detect any signs of facial nerve paralysis or paresthesia. The period of recovery from any paralysis was also observed.

Magnetic resonance imaging was used to determine whether 3 patients treated by eminectomy, with the longest follow-up, had articular damage.

### SURGICAL PROCEDURES FOR EMINECTOMY

Exposure of the TMJ was done by the preauricular approach described by Ellis and Zide<sup>9</sup> with the patient under general anesthesia. After exposure and identification of the articular eminence, it was removed with a No. 703 drill. The jaw movements were then checked for interference and any required adjustments made (Fig 1).

### SURGICAL PROCEDURES FOR MINIPLATES

The same exposure of the TMJ was done for the placement of miniplates. After exposure and identification of the articular eminence, an L-shaped 2.0-mm miniplate was used, where the short arm of the plate was fixed with two 6-mm screws and the long arm served as a mechanical obstacle in the condylar path placed inferior and anterior to the articular eminence. The jaw movements were then checked for interference and any required adjustments made (Fig 2).

## Results

### EMINECTOMY

The data of the patients treated by eminectomy, including age, gender, MMO, presence of preoperative and postoperative pain and sounds, length of follow-up, and frequency of dislocations are shown in Table 1.

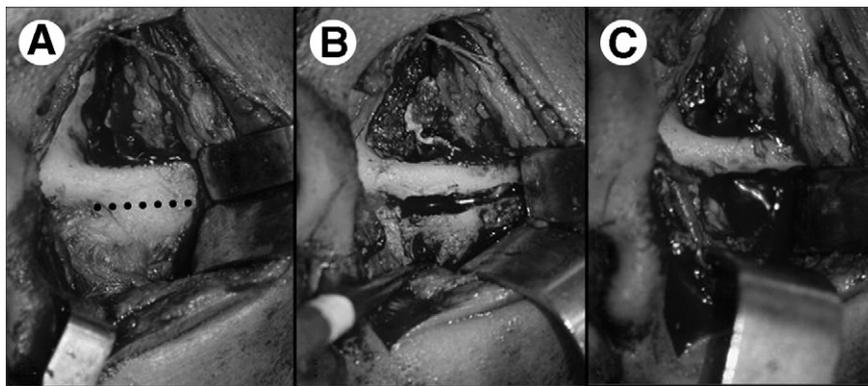
The mean age of the patients in this group was 31.4 years (range, 22-52 years). The mean duration of postoperative follow-up was 37.4 months (range, 2-63 months). There were a total of 20 eminectomies for the treatment of chronic mandibular dislocation in 10 patients.

The mean preoperative and postoperative MMO was  $48.4 \pm 8.5$  mm and  $41.3 \pm 5.0$  mm, respectively.

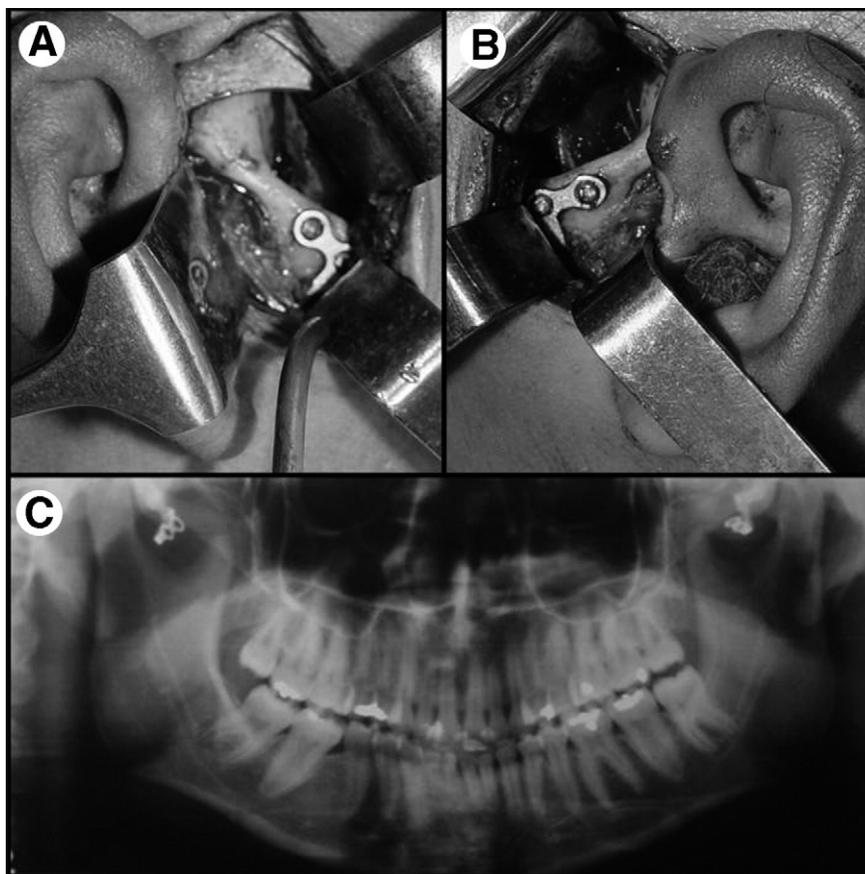
There were sounds in the TMJ in 4 patients preoperatively, and 2 continued to have this sign after surgery. In 1 patient with no preoperative sounds, crepitation was observed postoperatively.

Of the 4 patients who reported pain preoperatively, only 1 continued to have this symptom. One patient who did not report pain preoperatively felt some pain in the postoperative period.

The magnetic resonance images in 3 patients treated by eminectomy showed that there was no articular damage in any of them (Fig 3).



**FIGURE 1.** Surgical procedure for eminectomy. A, Identification of articular eminence. B, C, Removal of articular eminence with a No. 703 drill.



**FIGURE 2.** Surgical procedure for miniplates. A, Placement of an L-shaped 2.0-mm miniplate on right side. B, Placement of miniplate on left side. C, Panoramic radiograph showing placement of miniplate inferior and anterior to articular eminence.

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No nerve paralysis or recurrence of mandibular dislocation was observed in any patient.

**MINIPLATES**

The data of the patients treated by use of miniplates, including age, gender, preoperative and

postoperative MMO, follow-up and facial nerve injury, are shown in **Table 2**.

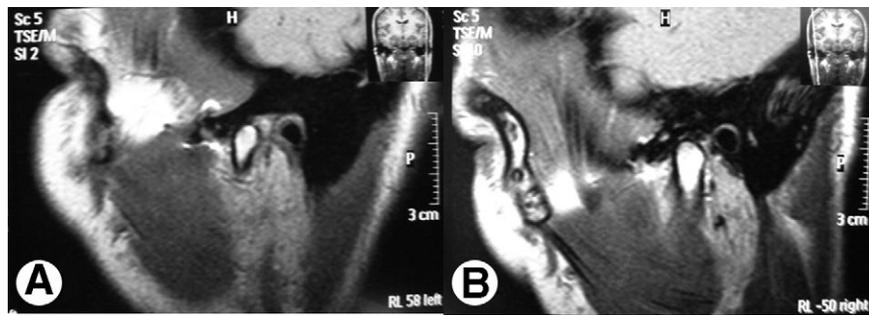
The mean age of the patients in this group was 29.3 years (range, 22-42 years). The mean duration of postoperative follow-up was 59.75 months (range, 48-69 months). There were a total of 16 placements of

**Table 1. DATA OF PATIENTS TREATED BY EMINECTOMY**

Patient No.	Gender	Age (yr)	MMO (mm)		Pain		Sound		Follow-Up (mo)	Dislocation Frequency (mo)
			Preop	Postop	Preop	Postop	Preop	Postop		
1	M	24	53	46	N	N	N	N	63	2
2	F	24	52	47	Y	N	N	N	62	40
3	M	40	47	45	N	N	N	Y	62	3
4	M	27	55	45	N	N	Y	N	61	3
5	F	24	51	44	N	Y	N	N	53	28
6	F	22	50	41	Y	N	Y	Y	38	14
7	F	52	61	32	N	N	Y	N	17	21
8	F	29	30	36	N	N	N	N	5	21
9	F	27	43	40	Y	N	N	N	10	7
10	F	45	42	37	Y	Y	Y	Y	3	1

Abbreviations: Preop, preoperatively; Post, postoperatively.

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**FIGURE 3.** Magnetic resonance images showing placement of articular disc on left side (A) and on right side (B).

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miniplates for the treatment of chronic mandibular dislocation in 8 patients.

The mean preoperative and postoperative MMO was  $42.75 \pm 11.53$  mm and  $45.62 \pm 8.52$  mm, respectively.

The major complication found was unilateral miniplate fracture in 2 patients (Fig 2). In one of these patients there was recurrence of the mandibular dislocation. Both patients were treated by removal of the bilateral miniplates and bilateral eminectomy, and at present, they have shown no recurrence. No nerve paralysis was observed in any patient.

Comparisons of both treatments are shown in Tables 3 and 4.

## Discussion

Surgery is often appropriate when dislocation is prolonged or recurrent.<sup>10</sup> Numerous surgical procedures for habitual dislocation have been described in the literature based on the creation of a mechanical obstacle in the condylar path, such as positioning the disc anterior to the condyle, downfracturing of the zygomatic arch and fixation medial to the eminence, or insertion of implants into the eminence.<sup>10,11</sup> In

addition, there are other modes of treatment that aim to restrict movement of the condyle such as the injection of sclerosing substances or even the induction of fibrosis in the tissues adjacent to the joint.<sup>11,12</sup> Another type of treatment is removal of the mechanical obstacles in the condylar path; one such procedure is eminectomy, which was introduced by Myrhaug in 1951<sup>1,10</sup> and has been used with satisfactory results and efficacy according to the literature.<sup>13-15</sup>

Each form of treatment has its own advantages and disadvantages. The placement of a titanium miniplate in the articular eminence aims to prevent hyperexcursion of the condyle, thereby avoiding its displacement. It has the advantage of being a reversible and less invasive method, but it has the disadvantage of leading to a decrease in MMO,<sup>11,12</sup> which was seen in only 4 patients (50%) of our series (Table 2). The other 2 who had an increase in mouth opening had also the plate fracture. The possibility of plate fracturing is another disadvantage, requiring a further operation for removal of the device and choice of a new treatment, which occurred in 2 cases in our series. According to the results of this study, we suggest that plate fracturing could be explained by material fa-

**Table 2. DATA OF PATIENTS TREATED WITH MINIPLATES**

Patient No.	Gender	Age (yr)	MMO (mm)		Complications	Follow-Up (mo)	Facial Nerve Paralysis
			Preop	Postop			
1	M	30	39	35	None	67	N
2	F	42	24	45	None	67	N
3	F	22	57	41	None	48	N
4	M	40	40	37	None	69	N
5	F	26	40	52	None	67	N
6	F	24	34	50	Recurrence and plate fracture on right side	48	N
7	F	32	57	61	Plate fracture on right side	61	N
8	F	24	51	44	None	51	N

Abbreviations: Preop, preoperatively; Post, postoperatively.

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tigue, where the plate was bent during the adaptation to the articular eminence during surgery. Therefore the plate is not proper for the treatment of condylar dislocation, which is in agreement with the findings of Kuttenger and Hardt.<sup>11</sup>

The way of placing the miniplate may influence the final result. As described by Buckley and Terry,<sup>16</sup> in our study the short arm of the miniplate was fixed in the zygomatic arch, and the long arm served as a mechanical barrier to condyle movement. With the aim of increasing the articular eminence, Puelacher and Waldhart<sup>12</sup> and Bakardjiev<sup>3</sup> used the miniplate contouring it, thus creating a mechanical obstacle in the condylar path. Bakardjiev<sup>3</sup> stated that placing bicortical screws in the zygomatic arch may decrease the chance of loosening of the miniplate. In this study the miniplates were placed according to the techniques used in these studies: the short arm of the plate was fixed with two 6-mm screws, and the long arm served as a mechanical obstacle in the condylar path placed inferior and anterior to the articular eminence.

The placement of an obstacle in the articular eminence may result in some degree of limitation of mouth opening. Removing the eminence (ie, eminectomy) may lead to hypermobility, which may cause a degeneration of the joint and excessive mouth opening<sup>10</sup>; however, according to our study, this was not found to be true. All the joints in 3 patients treated by eminectomy appeared normal on magnetic resonance images. This being so, it was to be expected that the mean preoperative MMO would be lower than the postoperative MMO. Nevertheless, the opposite was observed in this study, which might be accounted for by the presence of fibrosis, resulting from the surgical procedure itself.

Eminectomy, even when performed with rotary instruments, may leave rugged areas that could lead to crepitation of the bone during the movement of mouth opening. This is the likely explanation for the presence of crepitation in the TMJ only postoperatively in patient 3. The major complaint of patients is the condyle locking anterior to the eminence itself,

**Table 3. PREOPERATIVE AND POSTOPERATIVE MAXIMAL INTERINCISAL OPENING IN EMINECTOMY AND MINIPLATE GROUPS**

Treatment	Mean Maximal Interincisal Opening (mm)	
	Preoperatively	Postoperatively
Eminectomy	48.4 ± 8.5	41.3 ± 5.0
Miniplate	42.75 ± 11.53	45.62 ± 8.52

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**Table 4. RECURRENCE IN EMINECTOMY AND MINIPLATE GROUPS**

	Total [n (%)]	With Recurrence [n (%)]	Without Recurrence [n (%)]
Treatment			
Eminectomy	10 (55.56)	0 (0)	10 (55.55)
Miniplate	8 (44.44)	2 (11.11)	6 (33.33)
Total	18 (100)	2 (11.11)	16 (88.89)

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because it leads to a stretching of articular components, causing pain. As a result, there is a complete remission of the symptoms after treatment. No causal relationship was found for the pain reported by patient 5, and the pain that failed to subside in patient 10 was likely because of this patient's short postoperative follow-up.

Regardless of the surgical approach used to gain access to the TMJ, the final dissection places the facial nerve at risk for damage.<sup>17,18</sup> A loss of function of the frontalis and orbicularis oculi muscles is always a possibility.<sup>17</sup> The prevalence of complications, such as injury to the facial nerve, is very low,<sup>19,20</sup> with rates varying from 9% to 18%<sup>21</sup> and 1.5% to 32%,<sup>18</sup> and any resulting lesion usually disappears within 6 months. Thus the correct choice of technique for making the approach to the TMJ in this study was seen to have been made, because no facial nerve paralysis was observed in any of the cases. The chosen technique<sup>9</sup> allows protection to the nerve since a subperiosteal dissection along the lateral face of the zygomatic arch is made, leaving the temporal branches of the facial nerve located within the substance of the retracted flap.

Eminectomy had less chance of recurrence without creating articular damage, and by use of miniplates, the chance of recurrence increased because there is always the possibility of the miniplate fracturing, requiring a further operation for removal of the device and choice of a new treatment. Thus eminectomy was shown to be more efficient in the treatment of chronic mandibular dislocations than the use of miniplates in relation to postoperative MMO, recurrence, and articular function.

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