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ALGORITHMIC APPROACH ON DECISION MAKING FOR SURGICAL AND NON- SURGICAL MANAGEMENT OF COMMON HAND FRACTURES PATTERNS

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Dear Editor

A practical approach for decision making processes in hand fracture fixation represents an invaluable source of knowledge and practice for hand surgeons as well as their trainees.

The decision on fracture management, surgically or non-surgically, is the challenge. A very good example is the correction of a mild degree of malalignment; for example, comparing a mild degree of malalignment in a reasonably mobile finger to a strong aligned one that does not bend as it should. The challenge will eventually rely on the decision-making process of which fracture to fix, and which not to. Moreover, attention should be paid to the importance of early mobilisation and early physiotherapy, and the highlight on some difficult fracture fixation and their challenging rehabilitation process.

Here we propose a simple assessment and management algorithm to enable our decision-making process on managing these fractures. This is clearly presented in the figure attached below (Figure 1).

Essentially, the first question to answer is whether the fracture is in an acceptable position or not, and that is by reviewing and addressing both the patient and the x-ray collectively. If it is not, then reduction of the fracture site into an acceptable position is essential. The second question is whether the fracture is stable or not, and if it is, then mobilisation is safe and encouraged, and if not then will need fixation to allow early and safe mobilisation. However, if stability was difficult to assess or the surgeon was unsure of the potential fracture instability, then a further assessment after early gentle mobilisation is advised; assessing both the patient and the repeated x-ray simultaneously. This brings the assessment back to the top of the algorithm pathway to make the decision of further treatment.

Most importantly, we remind with the importance of all operative fixation being rigid enough to allow immediate mobilisation and appropriate rehabilitation therapy.

Finally, we recommend taken in consideration this simple yet important assessment and management algorithm for treatment of these common hand fracture, which will be an important addition to this invaluable journal's volume.

Regards,
Diaa Othman

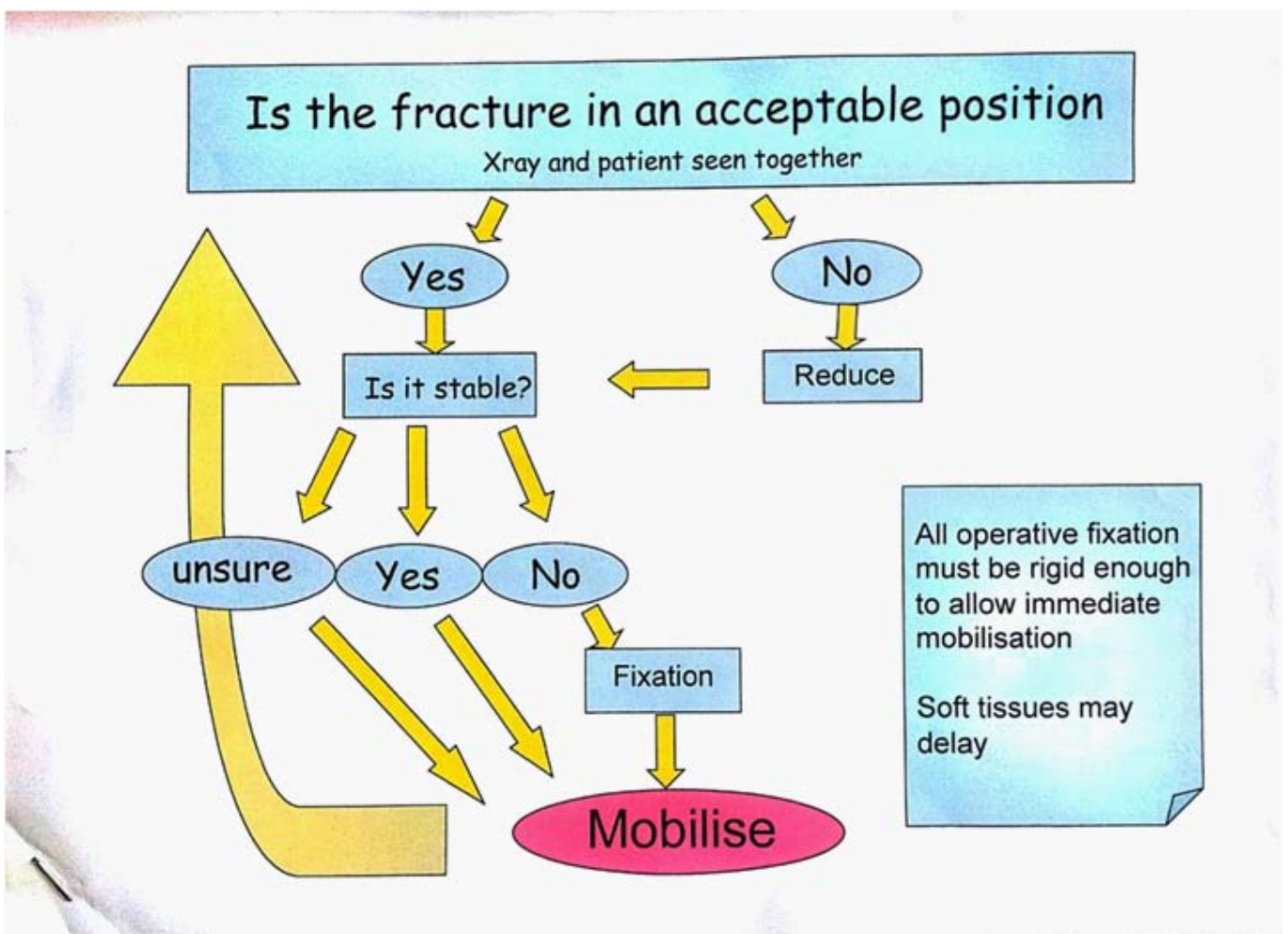


Figure 1: simple assessment and management algorithm