DEPOSITION OF CALCIUM SALTS IN THE POPLITEUS TENDON

N. T. HOLDEN, MANSFIELD, ENGLAND

Formerly Orthopaedic Registrar, Guy’s Hospital, London

The deposition of calcium in ligaments and tendons about the knee joint is uncommon. Lamb (1952) described two cases of deposition of calcium salts in the medial ligament, but the occurrence of deposits on the outer side of the knee does not appear to have been recorded before.

CASE REPORTS

Case 1 A male cook aged sixty-four gave a history of pain in the postero-lateral part of the left knee for two months. Examination showed a tender swelling, which disappeared on flexion, on the outer side of the joint. A cystic lateral cartilage was suspected. A radiograph showed a deposit lying in the position of the popliteus tendon (Fig. 1). As the symptoms were not relieved by rest the knee was explored. Arthrotomy revealed an intact lateral cartilage without evidence of cystic degeneration, but the popliteus tendon was found to be oedematous with a whitish mass discernible within its substance. After incision of the sheath, a semi-solid deposit which was under considerable tension was removed. Subsequent progress was uneventful and the patient returned to work a month later. A radiograph two months later (Fig. 2) showed very little evidence of the deposit.

Pathological examination—The material was chiefly acellular collagen with a low calcium content. It was not possible to estimate the relative proportions of calcium phosphate and calcium carbonate.
Case 2—A woman aged sixty had complained of severe pain on the outer side of the knee for two days. On examination the knee was found to be swollen, movements were considerably restricted and there was tenderness over the lateral joint line. A tear of the lateral cartilage was suspected. A radiograph showed a deposit of calcium on the lateral side of the joint (Fig. 3). With rest in bed the pain rapidly subsided, and a radiograph taken six weeks later showed the mass to be much smaller (Fig. 4). A year later the knee remained painless.

SUMMARY

1. Two cases of deposition of calcium on the outer side of the knee are described.
2. The condition is believed to be uncommon and does not appear to have been described before.
3. One case resolved with conservative treatment, the other after an operation at which the deposit was found in the tendon of popliteus.

I wish to thank Mr J. S. Batchelor for permission to use the case notes.

REFERENCE