

TRIVIAL YET DEVASTATING

A delayed presentation of a finger fracture



Written by

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Hand injuries are very common. Fractures of the hand (metacarpals and phalanges) are the most common fractures of the upper limb. However, these trivial injuries can sometimes lead to devastating outcomes if patients do not seek medical attention early.

I manage all types of hand injuries (from soft tissue to bony injuries) and I would like to share a recent hand injury case with you.

Ms. S (name omitted to maintain confidentiality) is a 24-year-old, left-hand dominant, semi-elite basketball player who presented to my clinic with a 3-week-old fracture at the base of the middle phalanx of her left ring finger. She sustained this injury playing dodge ball during her holidays. She initially thought she had “jarred” her finger and left it alone. She only went to see her GP when she realised she couldn’t flex her proximal interphalangeal joint (PIPJ). Her GP referred her to see me the next day.



Mr Andy SG Ang is an Upper Limb Orthopaedic Surgeon sub specialising in treating hand conditions.



"It gives me great joy to see my patients getting back to their pre-injury state."

She had sustained a comminuted intra-articular pilon fracture of the base of the middle phalanx, with dorsal subluxation of the PIPJ. The fracture involved 50% of the articular surface and there was a central articular depression with splaying of the articular margin.

I explained my clinical assessment findings to her as well as my treatment options and opinion. She was in tears as she was worried the injury might jeopardise her basketball career and ability to play guitar, which she loved. She was booked for an open reduction internal fixation with plate and screws configuration and an autologous bone graft from her distal radius.

I work very closely with hand therapists so my patients benefit from early range of motion to improve post-surgical outcomes and reduce the risk of stiffness.

She was seen post-operatively in my clinic, with great results from her surgery. She has since returned to playing basketball and guitar. It gives me great joy to see my patients getting back to their pre-injury state.

