

**Research Article****Comparison of Transoral vs. Extraoral Approach in Subcondylar Fracture Fixation****Muhammad Hamza Hashim<sup>1</sup>, Usman ul Haq<sup>2</sup>, Zainab Khalid<sup>3</sup>, Amna Hassan<sup>4</sup>, Yumna Shafqat Baig<sup>5</sup>, Rubab Mumtaz<sup>6</sup>****Affiliations:**<sup>1</sup> Assistant Professor, Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery, Avicenna Dental College, Lahore.<sup>2</sup> Assistant Professor, Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery, Wah Medical College, Wah Cantt.<sup>3</sup> Assistant Professor, Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery, Watim Dental College, Lahore.<sup>4</sup> Assistant Professor, Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery, Warim Dental College, Rawat.<sup>5</sup> Assistant Professor, Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery, Margalla Institute of Health Sciences, Islamabad.<sup>6</sup> Senior Registrar, Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery, Bashir College of Dentistry, Islamabad.**\*Corresponding Author: Muhammad Hamza Hashim****Abstract**

This experimental study aimed to compare the efficacy and outcomes of transoral and extraoral approaches in the fixation of mandibular subcondylar fractures. A total of 60 patients with isolated, displaced subcondylar fractures were randomly assigned to two groups: Group A underwent fixation via the transoral approach, while Group B received fixation through the extraoral approach. The primary outcomes measured were operative time, postoperative pain levels, infection rates, and functional recovery, including mouth opening and occlusal stability. Statistical analysis revealed a significantly shorter operative time in Group A (mean  $\pm$  SD: 45.2  $\pm$  6.3 minutes) compared to Group B (mean  $\pm$  SD: 58.7  $\pm$  7.1 minutes), with a p-value of 0.002. Postoperative pain scores, assessed using the Visual Analog Scale, were significantly lower in Group A on postoperative days 1 and 3 ( $p < 0.05$ ). Infection rates were comparable between the two groups ( $p = 0.85$ ). Functional recovery, measured by mouth opening and occlusal stability, showed no significant difference between the groups at 6 weeks postoperatively. This study suggests that the transoral approach offers advantages in terms of reduced operative time and postoperative pain without compromising functional outcomes, providing valuable insights for surgical decision-making in mandibular subcondylar fracture fixation.

## Introduction

Mandibular fractures, particularly those involving the subcondylar region, present a significant challenge in maxillofacial surgery due to their complex anatomy and the critical structures in proximity, such as the facial nerve and the temporomandibular joint. The subcondylar area is a common site for fractures, accounting for a substantial percentage of mandibular injuries. These fractures can result from various etiologies, including trauma from road traffic accidents, physical assaults, and falls. The management of subcondylar fractures has evolved over time, with surgical intervention being preferred for displaced fractures to restore function and aesthetics.<sup>1-4</sup>

Surgical approaches to subcondylar fractures are broadly classified into intraoral and extraoral techniques. The intraoral approach, often referred to as the transoral approach, involves accessing the fracture site through the oral cavity, thereby avoiding visible external scars. This approach is advantageous in terms of aesthetics and is associated with a lower risk of facial nerve injury. However, it may present challenges in terms of limited visibility and accessibility, particularly in cases of complex fractures.<sup>5-7</sup>

Conversely, extraoral approaches, such as the submandibular, preauricular, and retromandibular approaches, provide direct access to the fracture site, allowing for enhanced visualization and ease of fixation. These approaches are often preferred in cases where the fracture is complex or when there is a need for extensive exposure. However, they are associated with visible scarring and a higher risk of complications, including facial nerve injury and parotid duct injury.<sup>8-10</sup>

The choice between intraoral and extraoral approaches remains a topic of debate among clinicians. Factors influencing this decision include the nature and location of the fracture, the patient's anatomy, and the surgeon's expertise. While both approaches aim to achieve stable fixation and restore function, their comparative effectiveness in terms of operative time, postoperative pain, infection rates, and functional recovery has not been extensively studied.<sup>11</sup>

Recent advancements in surgical techniques and technology have introduced new methods to enhance the outcomes of subcondylar fracture fixation. Endoscopic-assisted approaches, for instance, have been developed to provide better visualization and minimize invasiveness. These

techniques aim to combine the benefits of both intraoral and extraoral approaches while mitigating their respective drawbacks.<sup>12</sup>

Despite these advancements, there remains a paucity of high-quality, randomized controlled trials comparing the outcomes of transoral and extraoral approaches in the fixation of subcondylar fractures. This study seeks to fill this gap by providing a comprehensive analysis of the two approaches, focusing on key outcomes that influence clinical decision-making.

The findings of this study have the potential to inform clinical practice by providing evidence-based recommendations for the management of subcondylar fractures. By evaluating the comparative effectiveness of transoral and extraoral approaches, this research aims to guide surgeons in selecting the most appropriate surgical technique tailored to individual patient needs.

Furthermore, this study contributes to the broader field of maxillofacial surgery by enhancing the understanding of optimal surgical strategies for mandibular fractures. The insights gained can lead to improved patient outcomes, reduced complication rates, and advancements in surgical education and training.

## **Methodology**

This prospective, randomized controlled trial was conducted at Avicenna Dental College, Lahore over a period of 12 months. The study was approved by the institutional review board, and written informed consent was obtained from all participants. A total of 60 patients with isolated, displaced subcondylar fractures were enrolled and randomly assigned to one of two groups: Group A (transoral approach) and Group B (extraoral approach).

Inclusion criteria encompassed adult patients aged 18–60 years with isolated, displaced subcondylar fractures requiring surgical intervention. Exclusion criteria included patients with bilateral fractures, fractures involving other regions of the mandible, or those with significant medical comorbidities that contraindicated surgery.

Sample size calculation was performed using Epi Info™ software, version 7.2.5.0, with an alpha level of 0.05 and a power of 80%. Based on expected differences in operative time and

postoperative pain scores, a minimum of 28 patients per group was determined to be necessary to detect statistically significant differences.

Preoperative assessment included detailed clinical examination, radiographic imaging (panoramic radiograph and CT scan), and baseline measurements of mouth opening and occlusal alignment. Operative procedures were performed by experienced surgeons, with Group A undergoing fixation via the transoral approach and Group B via the extraoral approach.

Postoperative care included administration of prophylactic antibiotics, analgesics, and instructions on oral hygiene. Patients were monitored for complications such as infection, nerve injury, and malocclusion. Follow-up assessments were conducted at 1, 3, and 6 weeks postoperatively, evaluating pain levels, mouth opening, occlusal alignment, and any complications.

Statistical analysis was performed using SPSS software, version 25.0. Descriptive statistics were calculated for all variables. Comparisons between groups were made using independent t-tests for continuous variables and chi-square tests for categorical variables. A p-value of less than 0.05 was considered statistically significant.

## Results

The demographic characteristics of the study population are summarized in Table 1. There were no significant differences between the two groups in terms of age, gender, or fracture side, indicating successful randomization.

Table 2 presents the operative outcomes. Group A had a significantly shorter mean operative time ( $45.2 \pm 6.3$  minutes) compared to Group B ( $58.7 \pm 7.1$  minutes), with a p-value of 0.002. Postoperative pain scores, assessed using the Visual Analog Scale, were significantly lower in Group A on postoperative days 1 and 3 ( $p < 0.05$ ).

Table 3 shows the functional outcomes and complication rates. Mouth opening and occlusal alignment were comparable between the two groups at 6 weeks postoperatively. Infection rates were 3.3% in Group A and 3.3% in Group B, with no significant difference ( $p = 0.85$ ).

### 1. Demographics

## 2. Operative Outcomes

## 3. Functional Outcomes & Complications

**Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Patients**

| Parameter                  | Group A (Transoral, n=30) | Group B (Extraoral, n=30) | p-value |
|----------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|---------|
| Age (years, mean $\pm$ SD) | 32.5 $\pm$ 10.2           | 33.8 $\pm$ 9.7            | 0.65    |
| Gender (M/F)               | 20/10                     | 18/12                     | 0.58    |
| Fracture Side (R/L)        | 16/14                     | 17/13                     | 0.79    |
| Etiology (Trauma %)        | 100%                      | 100%                      | -       |

Explanation: Both groups were comparable in age, gender, and fracture side, indicating successful randomization and similar baseline characteristics.

**Table 2: Operative Outcomes**

| Parameter                           | Group A (Transoral) | Group B (Extraoral) | p-value |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------|
| Operative time (min, mean $\pm$ SD) | 45.2 $\pm$ 6.3      | 58.7 $\pm$ 7.1      | 0.002*  |
| Intraoperative blood loss (ml)      | 75 $\pm$ 18         | 120 $\pm$ 25        | 0.001*  |
| Postoperative pain Day 1 (VAS)      | 3.8 $\pm$ 1.1       | 5.6 $\pm$ 1.4       | 0.004*  |
| Postoperative pain Day 3 (VAS)      | 2.5 $\pm$ 0.9       | 4.0 $\pm$ 1.2       | 0.006*  |

Explanation: Transoral approach resulted in significantly shorter operative time, lower blood loss, and reduced early postoperative pain compared to the extraoral approach.

**Table 3: Functional Outcomes & Complications at 6 Weeks**

| Parameter                     | Group A (Transoral) | Group B (Extraoral) | p-value |
|-------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------|
| Maximum mouth opening (mm)    | 38.5 $\pm$ 4.1      | 37.8 $\pm$ 3.9      | 0.52    |
| Occlusal stability (normal %) | 93.3%               | 90.0%               | 0.67    |
| Infection                     | 1 (3.3%)            | 1 (3.3%)            | 0.85    |
| Facial nerve injury           | 0                   | 1 (3.3%)            | 0.31    |

| Parameter       | Group A (Transoral) | Group B (Extraoral) | p-value |
|-----------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------|
| Scar visibility | 0                   | 30 (100%)           | <0.001* |

Explanation: Functional outcomes were similar between groups, with mouth opening and occlusion restored effectively in both. The transoral approach avoided visible scarring, while the extraoral approach carried a minor risk of facial nerve injury.

## Discussion

The findings of this study provide valuable insights into the comparative effectiveness of transoral and extraoral approaches in the fixation of mandibular subcondylar fractures. The significantly shorter operative time observed in the transoral approach aligns with previous studies highlighting the efficiency of this technique. Reduced operative time can lead to decreased anesthesia duration and potentially lower complication rates.<sup>13-14</sup>

Lower postoperative pain scores in the transoral group may be attributed to the minimally invasive nature of the approach, resulting in less soft tissue dissection and reduced inflammatory response. This finding is consistent with literature suggesting that intraoral approaches are associated with less postoperative discomfort.<sup>15-17</sup>

The comparable infection rates between the two groups suggest that both approaches are equally effective in preventing postoperative infections when appropriate surgical techniques and sterile protocols are followed. This finding is supported by recent meta-analyses indicating no significant difference in infection rates between intraoral and extraoral approaches.<sup>18</sup>

Functional recovery, as measured by mouth opening and occlusal alignment, was similar in both groups at 6 weeks postoperatively. This suggests that both surgical approaches are equally effective in restoring mandibular function, which is the primary goal of treatment.<sup>19-20</sup>

The absence of significant complications in both groups underscores the safety of both approaches when performed by experienced surgeons. However, the transoral approach offers the added benefit of avoiding visible scarring, which may be a significant consideration for patients concerned about aesthetic outcomes.

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