Predictors of Early Complications of Total Shoulder Arthroplasty

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The authors hypothesized that age, body mass index (BMI), and medical comorbidities (graded with the Charlson Comorbidity index [CCI]) could be used to predict early complications after TSA. The authors performed a retrospective review of primary TSAs with a minimum of 90-day follow-up. One hundred twenty-seven patients met the inclusion criteria. Complications occurred in 12 (9.4%) of patients. Major complications occurred in 1 patient (0.8%), medical in 8 (6.3%), and surgical in 4 (3.1%). CCI significantly correlated with complication rates and multivariate regression analysis demonstrated CCI to be the only significant determinant of overall complication rates ($P = 0.005$) and medical complication rates ($P = 0.015$). While BMI subgroup did not affect complication rates, transfusion rates, intra-operative blood loss, or operative time, our study may have been underpowered for this variable.

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Total shoulder arthroplasty (TSA) offers significant pain relief and functional improvement in patients with degenerative joint disease of the glenohumeral joint with a functional rotator cuff [1–3]. Complications, however, occur in roughly 10% [4,5]. These complications range widely in severity and can include seroma formation, acute blood-loss anemia requiring transfusion [5–7], neurologic injury [8], dislocation [9], infection [10], cardiopulmonary complications [11], and even death [12]. Given that these procedures are performed on an elective basis, orthopaedic surgeons must develop a full understanding of the risk factors for the development of a complication so that patients can be accurately counseled pre-operatively.

Within the hip and knee arthroplasty literature, the risk factors that can contribute to post-operative complications include medical comorbidities and body mass index (BMI) [13,14]. Similar studies have been performed examining total shoulder arthroplasty complications in the intra-operative, peri-operative, and post-operative period [4–7,10–12,15–21]. However, the results of these studies have conflicted with one another and thus it remains unclear which factors are the most important determinants of post-operative complication rates. While some have identified medical comorbidities as significant determinants of cardiopulmonary complications [11] and mortality [12], others have found no correlation between medical comorbidities in rates of infection, revision surgery, or overall complication rates [10,16,19,20,22]. Similarly, BMI has been identified as a predictor of complications and need for revision in some studies [11,18,20,23], while others have either shown higher BMI to be protective or to have no effect [5,6,10,19,22]. Still other studies have examined complication rates without analyzing the effect of medical comorbidities or BMI [4,5,7,15]. Unfortunately, these studies have also combined primary TSA, revision TSA, reverse TSA, and/or humeral hemiarthroplasty [11,12]. These procedures have widely divergent complication rates. Complication rates after reverse TSA are 25-50% [24,25] while those after TSA are 10% [4,5]. In addition, some studies have included patients with proximal humeral fractures in their cohort, which significantly alters the patient population and circumstances of the risk/benefit discussion [16]. Given these difficulties with the previous literature little evidence exists to guide the surgeon as the complication rates and predictors after primary anatomic TSA.

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Our primary questions with this study were: 1) What is the incidence and type of early complications after primary TSA by a single-surgeon in a consecutive series of patients? 2) Do medical comorbidities predict these complications? 3) Does BMI predict these complications? 4) If both of these variables predict complications, which is a more important predictor? We hypothesized that 1) the incidence of complications would be similar to that published in the literature and that these would be primarily minor medical complications, 2) medical comorbidities would serve as primary determinant of rates of acute post-operative complications after TSA, 3) BMI would serve as a primary determinant of rates of acute post-operative complications after TSA, and 4) BMI would be more predictive of complication rates than medical comorbidities.

Materials and Methods

Our institutional review board approved this study. All patients who underwent TSA by the senior author with a minimum of 90-days of post-operative follow-up were included in this study. Exclusion criteria included a history of prior ipsilateral shoulder arthroplasty, or incomplete peri- or post-operative records. Indications for TSA included glenohumeral osteoarthritis, glenohumeral post-traumatic arthritis, and glenohumeral instability arthropathy.

The operative reports, peri-operative inpatient records, and post-operative outpatient records for each patient were reviewed and the following data was recorded: age, gender, BMI, laterality of the dominant extremity, laterality of the TSA, indication for TSA, medical comorbidities, length of the procedure in minutes (min), estimated intraoperative blood loss in milliliters (mL), specific implants, concomitant procedures, and the need for intra-operative or post-operative transfusion. All noted complications were recorded.

Medical comorbidities were quantified with the Charlson Comorbidity Index (CCI), an instrument validated for use in surgical patients [26–28]. This tool has been shown to be predictive of long-term mortality in patients based upon a score assigned to their medical conditions, such as renal dysfunction, oncologic history, and diabetes, assigning scores from 1–6 to each condition based upon their contribution to the risk of death [26–28]. CCI was calculated for each patient included in our study.

Complication Classification

Any event that deviated from the normal post-operative course was considered as a complication. Complications were then subdivided into “minor” and “major” as well as “medical” and “surgical” (Table 1). Complications that occurred locally at the operative site or that stemmed from the surgical site, such as instability, fracture, incisional breakdown, or transfusion due to operative blood loss were considered “surgical” while systemic complications such as renal insufficiency, myocardial infarction, and thromboembolic complications were considered “medical”.

Statistical Analysis

All analyses were performed in SPSS 18 (IBM Inc., Armonk, NY). Descriptive statistics were calculated. An \textit{a priori} decision was made to divide patients into three groups: Group 1 normal BMI (BMI less than 25), Group 2 BMI classified as overweight or “mildly obese” or class 1 obesity (BMI 25–35), and Group 3 BMI classified as moderately/severely obese or class II or greater obesity (BMI >35) [30]. These group divisions were made based upon our anecdotal clinical experience, the mean and standard deviation of BMI of the average patient undergoing TSA and reverse TSA (RTSA) in the senior authors' practice (\(\pm 5\)), as well as evidence from the hip and knee arthroplasty literature suggesting that complication rates may not be increased until obesity is severe [14]. CCI was divided \textit{a priori} into those patients with medical complications (CCI >0) and those without (CCI = 0).

Kolmogorov–Smirnov analysis was performed on continuous variables and all variables significantly differed from the normal distribution (\(P < 0.05\)). Thus Kruskal–Wallis test was performed to compare continuous variables between BMI groups and CCI groups. Statistical comparison of categorical variables involved the chi-square test.

Given concern that multiple variables may predict complication rates, multivariate logistic regression was planned to determine which variables served as the primary determinants of complication rates.

Results

One hundred and thirty-two consecutive patients underwent anatomic TSA. Five patients were excluded as they were revision cases, leaving 127 patients that met the inclusion criteria. These patients were 58% female with an average age of 66.3. The vast majority of patients underwent TSA for a diagnosis of osteoarthritis (120/127 patients) with a minority undergoing TSA for post-traumatic arthritis (4/127 patients) or instability-related arthropathy (3/127). Complications were infrequent, occurring in 9.4% of patients. The majority were classified as minor, with only a single major complication occurring (post-operative dislocation requiring revision surgery). An additional dislocation occurred, which was successfully treated with closed reduction and thus classified as minor. Medical complications occurred in eight patients and included urinary retention requiring catheterization (four patients), hypotension and tachycardia requiring transfer to our critical care unit for more intensive monitoring (two patients), severe nausea and vomiting limiting rehabilitation (one patient), and hypotension requiring free-water restriction (one patient). Surgical complications occurred in four patients and included two dislocations and three transfusions for acute blood loss anemia. No thromboembolic complications, infections, or mortalities occurred.

The mean CCI for the cohort was 0.3 (Table 3). BMI correlated with CCI (\(P < 0.001\), Table 3). Mean age, operative indications, operative time, estimated blood loss, and percentage of patients requiring a transfusion did not differ between patients in CCI subgroups (\(P > 0.244\) in all cases). Overall complication rates were significantly more frequent in the group with a CCI > 0 (\(P = 0.024\)). Significantly higher CCI scores were seen in those with a complication (0.75) as compared to those without (0.24, \(P = 0.01\), Table 4). In addition,
significantly higher CCI scores were seen in those with surgical complications (1.00) than those without (0.27, P = 0.002, Table 4).

Mean BMI for our cohort was 30.5 ± 5.9 (Fig.). Mean age, operative indicators, operative time, estimated blood loss, and percentage of patients requiring a transfusion did not differ between patients in each BMI subgroup. Overall complication rates, major complication rates, medical complication rates, surgical complication rates, infection rates, dislocation rates, and mortality rates did not significantly differ between BMI subgroups (P > 0.256 in all cases, Table 2, Fig.).

Multivariate regression analysis with age, BMI subgroup, and CCI showed no significant correlations between age, BMI subgroup and overall complication rates, major complication rates, surgical complication rates, and medical complication rates (P > 0.243 in all cases, Table 5). However, significant correlations were observed between overall complication rates and CCI (P = 0.005, Table 5) and surgical complication rates and CCI (P = 0.015, Table 5). A post-hoc analysis performed to determine study power with respect to BMI found that a sample size of 253 patients would be required to find a difference between overall complication rates in those patients with a BMI of <30 and those patients with a BMI of >30, should one exist.

Discussion

Prior studies examining total shoulder arthroplasty complications in the intra-operative, peri-operative, and post-operative period have conflicted with one another and thus it remains unclear which factors are the most important determinants of post-operative complication rates [4–7,10–12,15–21]. This study sought to determine the incidence and determinants of peri-operative complications in a consecutive series of elective primary total shoulder arthroplasties performed by a single-surgeon. We hypothesized that medical comorbidities and BMI would serve as primary determinants of post-operative complications than BMI. Unpublished research at our institution has shown BMI to be a more important determinant of complications after RTSA than CCI. A reverse total shoulder arthroplasty (RTSA) has shown BMI to be a more important determinant of post-operative complications than BMI. Unpublished research at our institution has shown BMI to be a more important determinant of complications after RTSA than CCI.

In our study CCI was the most significant predictor of post-operative complications. Similarly, Singh and colleagues have shown CCI to be a significant predictor for cardiac events, thromboembolic events, and mortality after TSA [11,12]. However, these authors and others have failed to find any correlation between CCI and peri-prosthetic sepsis [10], risk for revision surgery [19,20], functional outcomes [22], and mid-term implant failure [16]. The differences in surgical complication rates between patients with high and low CCI may be driven by differences in pre-operative hemoglobin rates, a correlation noted in some but not all previous comparative studies [6,7,23]. Alternatively, physicians may have a lower threshold to transfuse patients with more comorbidities. Previous series’ have not found any correlation between pre-operative anti-coagulant use and transfusion rates [6,7,23].

BMI did not predict complications in our study. Due to the small sample size and overall low complication rates, type II error, failure to detect a difference that does exist, may have contributed to the lack of a difference between complication rates between BMI subgroups. Indeed, one past study did conclude that obesity leads to higher peri-operative complication rates [18]. This study, however, did not include a control group of non-obese patients, and thus no comparative conclusions can be drawn [18]. One previous series found complication rates to correlate with a BMI of 25–30 but not >30, a finding difficult to explain pathophysiologically due to the lack of a dose–response relationship [11]. Several past series have shown no correlation between obesity and post-TSA complications, suggesting that type II error may be less likely [5,6,10,11,19,22]. Singh and colleagues documented higher BMI as protective against 90 day mortality [12]. These same collaborators found no effect of BMI upon cardiac complications [11], peri-prosthetic sepsis [10], or revision surgery following TSA [19]. Authors at other institutions have found no effect of BMI upon functional outcomes [22] or transfusion rates [5,6].

Our study determined CCI to be a more important predictor of post-operative complications than BMI. Unpublished research at our own institution evaluating the impact of BMI on complications in reverse total shoulder arthroplasty (RTSA) has shown BMI to be a more important determinant of complications after RTSA than CCI. A

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Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Complication</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>BMI &lt; 25</th>
<th>BMI 25-35</th>
<th>BMI &gt; 35</th>
<th>P Value</th>
<th>CCI = 0</th>
<th>CCI &gt; 0</th>
<th>P Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percent (and number) sustaining a complication</td>
<td>9.4 (12)</td>
<td>6.7 (1)</td>
<td>7.6 (7)</td>
<td>19 (4)</td>
<td>0.256</td>
<td>6.2 (6)</td>
<td>20 (6)</td>
<td>0.024</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent (and number) sustaining a major complication</td>
<td>0.8 (1)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>1.1 (1)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0.819</td>
<td>1 (1)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0.577</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent (and number) sustaining a medical complication</td>
<td>6.3 (8)</td>
<td>6.7 (1)</td>
<td>4.4 (4)</td>
<td>14.3 (3)</td>
<td>0.243</td>
<td>4.1 (4)</td>
<td>13.3 (4)</td>
<td>0.070</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent (and number) sustaining a surgical complication</td>
<td>3.1 (4)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>3.3 (3)</td>
<td>4.8 (1)</td>
<td>0.714</td>
<td>2.1 (2)</td>
<td>2 (6.7)</td>
<td>0.207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent (and number) an infection</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>&gt;0.999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent (and number) dislocation</td>
<td>1.6 (2)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>2.2 (2)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0.669</td>
<td>2.1 (2)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0.428</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent (and number) of mortalities before final follow-up</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>&gt;0.999</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>BMI &lt; 25</th>
<th>BMI 25-35</th>
<th>BMI &gt; 35</th>
<th>P Value</th>
<th>CCI = 0</th>
<th>CCI &gt; 0</th>
<th>P Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean age</td>
<td>66.3</td>
<td>65.8</td>
<td>65.2</td>
<td>65.2</td>
<td>0.940</td>
<td>65.8</td>
<td>65.7</td>
<td>0.549</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent (and number) of females</td>
<td>46 (58)</td>
<td>67 (10)</td>
<td>40 (36)</td>
<td>62 (13)</td>
<td>0.045</td>
<td>44 (43)</td>
<td>53 (16)</td>
<td>0.388</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean Charlson Comorbidity Index</td>
<td>0.30</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean BMI</td>
<td>30.5</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>28.9</td>
<td>35.9</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indications (number of subjects)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Osteoarthritis</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0.641</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>0.920</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-traumatic arthritis</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instability-related arthropathy</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean operative time (minutes)</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>0.067</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>0.922</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean estimated blood loss</td>
<td>361</td>
<td>368</td>
<td>277</td>
<td>377</td>
<td>0.497</td>
<td>379</td>
<td>295</td>
<td>0.244</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent (and number) transfusion</td>
<td>2.4 (3)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>2.2 (2)</td>
<td>4.7 (1)</td>
<td>0.638</td>
<td>1 (1)</td>
<td>6.7 (2)</td>
<td>0.076</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NA = not applicable.

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After division of those patients with BMI < 25 (blue), those patients with BMI 25–35 (red), those patients with BMI > 35 (green), those patients without medical comorbidities (CCI = 0, purple) and those patients with medical comorbidities (CCI > 0, teal) bars denote the percentage of patients sustaining a complication, the perfect of patients sustaining a major complication, the percentage of patients sustaining a medical complication, the percentage of patients sustaining a surgical complication, and the percentage of the total population in that subgroup.

### Table 4
Mean CCI (Charleston Comorbidity Index) of Those Cohorts of Patients Who Sustained Any Complication, a Major Complication, a Surgical Complication, and a Medical Complication as Well as Mean CCI for Those Patients Who did not Sustain a Complication, Major Complication, Surgical Complication, or Medical Complication.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Complication</th>
<th>Mean CCI in Those Patients With a Complication</th>
<th>Mean CCI in Those Patients Without a Complication</th>
<th>P Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All complications</td>
<td>0.75 ± 0.97</td>
<td>0.24 ± 0.52</td>
<td>0.010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major complications</td>
<td>0.00 ± 0.00</td>
<td>0.29 ± 0.59</td>
<td>0.958</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surgical complications</td>
<td>1.00 ± 1.41</td>
<td>0.27 ± 0.54</td>
<td>0.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical complications</td>
<td>0.63 ± 0.74</td>
<td>0.27 ± 0.58</td>
<td>0.111</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are several limitations to our study. The retrospective nature of the study could potentially have missed complications not recorded in the medical record. Data from patients who sought treatment for a complication at an outside institution who failed to report such events at routine follow-up may have been missed. Unmeasured confounding variables such as fasting blood glucose levels, pre-operative hemoglobin levels, present of cardiac wall motion abnormalities on stress test results, etc. could account for the differences observed. Measurement of these variables could help to better delineate the medical factors most responsible for driving higher complication rates. Future research will be necessary to examine the physiological processes that confer increased risk of peri-operative complications in those patients with medical comorbidities. Additionally, given the findings of our post-hoc power analysis, type II error may play a role in our findings with respect to BMI. It should be acknowledged that this study represents only early complications after primary total shoulder arthroplasty, and data presented within should not be used to quote overall complication rates.

### Conclusions
Complication rates after primary anatomic TSA correlate with pre-operative medical comorbidities. Surgeons may wish to incorporate...
References


