



## **New surgical procedure can relieve arthritic pain in the wrist joints**

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Delegates to the 81<sup>st</sup> Annual Scientific Congress (ASC) of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons have been told of a new surgical procedure which can relieve arthritic pain in the carpometacarpal (CMC) joints, five joints in the wrist that articulate the distal row of carpal bones and the proximal bases of the five metacarpal bones.

Associate Professor Felix Behan, a Melbourne based hand surgeon, told delegates that the multiple number of procedures for this difficult problem of the ageing population is an indication that not every case can be treated by any one technique.

“A simple cartilage graft from the conchal fossa with overlying subcutaneous fat from the ear – a readily available harvest site – is suited to this difficult reconstructive problem and does not ruin any alternative options such as complicated trapezictomies, fusions and/or rolled flexor tendon inserts,” he said. “However, this technique does not preclude any of these surgical interventions at a later date.”

“An analysis of a series of 20 cases – with arthritic changes of the CMC, confirmed by X-rays to support the clinical state – demonstrates the usefulness of this simple insertion cartilage graft as a ‘washer’ between the arthritic joint surfaces to relieve pain and optimise function and ultimately improve the quality of life; turning a key or holding a cup of coffee become pain free movements.”

“The assessment of the functional recovery and pain free range of movement confirms the usefulness of this simple reconstructive tool, and is the basis of comparison with other reconstructive options.”

Associate Professor Behan concluded that in this ageing population series this procedure proved to be a low morbidity reconstructive technique. “It is simple to perform, results in an almost instantaneous pain free state and significantly enhances quality of life,” he said.

“As our population ages, and arthritis of the joints around the wrist becomes a more widespread problem, this interpositional graft represents a relatively simple and very effective solution to a complicated problem.”

This year’s ASC, with the theme ‘The Making of a Surgeon’, runs from 6 to 10 May and is being held at the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre. Approximately 2,500 delegates from Australia, New Zealand and around the world are attending.

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