

Ankylosing Tarsitis

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Ankylosing tarsitis is described as a form of juvenile spondyloarthritis (SpA). The syndrome comprises clinical and radiologic findings of the feet including inflammatory and proliferative changes¹. We describe a patient with Crohn's disease and ankylosing tarsitis.

A 45-year-old Black male with a history of SpA associated with Crohn's disease since age 13 had been treated with sulfasalazine and intermittent courses of corticosteroids. He presented with a flare of arthritis involving his feet, knees, and wrists. Articular examination revealed active synovitis of the right wrist and left ankle. The feet showed fusiform swelling over the tarsal region with limited range of motion of the forefoot. Laboratory tests revealed a negative rheumatoid factor, antinuclear antibody, and HLA-B27. Radiographs showed sacroiliitis bilaterally. Foot radiographs shown in Figure 1, with a closeup in Figure 2, revealed complete fusion of all tarsal joints. The articular symptoms were resistant to corticosteroids, and he was eventually given methotrexate, with improvement.

The differential diagnosis of tarsitis includes SpA, rheumatoid arthritis, and postinfectious arthritis. Tarsitis has also been described in asymptomatic first-degree relatives of

HLA-B27 positive patients with ankylosing tarsitis. Ankylosing tarsitis is strongly linked with HLA-B27 in almost 100% of cases and is found predominantly in boys². Clinical features include painful swelling of soft tissues around the malleoli, forefoot, and Achilles tendon with decreased range of motion of the ankle, tarsal, and metatarsophalangeal joints. The radiographic features of ankylosing tarsitis are joint space narrowing, osteopenia, cyst formation, erosions, enthesophytosis, and ankylosis of tarsal bones³. Ankylosing tarsitis may be regarded as the equivalent of the clinical and radiologic features of the spinal and sacroiliac joints in ankylosing spondylitis.

REFERENCES

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Figure 1. Plain radiograph of the foot and ankle showing ankylosis with complete fusion of the tarsal joints.



Figure 2. Enlargement showing tarsal region.