Bilateral radial head fractures

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OBJECTIVE: Radial head and neck fractures are common in young to middle age adults and are seen in nearly 20% of acute elbow injuries in this age group. Isolated radial head fractures are not common and include about 2% of all fractures around the elbow. Bilateral radial head fractures are rare. It can be usually associated with severe trauma and associated fractures and dislocations. These injuries can be easily missed by the attending physician if the symptoms are more severe on one side, thus easily neglecting the other.

CASE: A 32-year-old man presented to the emergency department following a fall on both outstretched hands in 2 meters height. She complained of pain and swelling in right elbows.

On clinical examination the radial heads were found to be tender. Supination and pronation of the fore arms were restricted bilaterally. There was no neurovascular deficit. No other injuries were noted. X-rays and CT scanning showed a Mason type I radial head fracture on both sides. No surgical intervention was needed. Oral analgesia was prescribed, and she was treated with a bilateral sling for approximately 2 weeks followed by elbow mobilization and physical therapy.

CONCLUSION: A high index of suspicion and thorough clinical and x-ray examination is essential in patients who present with a history of falls on outstretched hands.

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