



# The Incidence of the Associated Meniscal Ligament (ML) With the Anterior Cruciate Ligament (ACL) Tears

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## Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration among all authors. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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## ABSTRACT

**Objective:** To assess the incidence of the associated meniscal ligament (ML) with the anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) tears in hospital A in Medina-KSA. And to see the effect of sports activities in comparison between males and females.

**Materials and Methods:** In a retrospective study, ninety-nine patients' knee magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) records were selected conveniently from the (A) hospital's picture archiving and communication system (PACS). Patients with suspected anterior cruciate and meniscal ligament'

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tears were included. Patients with posterior cruciate ligament (PCL) tear, medial collateral ligament (MCL) or lateral collateral ligament (LCL) injury, and previously operated index knees were excluded. All patients were scanned by a 1.5T MRI machine using standard MRI knee scanning protocol. The categorical and continuous variables were presented as percentages, frequencies, and descriptive statistics. The cross-tabulations and chi-square test were applied to obtain the statistical associations between the study variables. A statistical association was considered significant if the P-value was  $< 0.05$ .

**Results:** 72 males and 27 females were included, with a mean age of  $33 \pm 2.43$ . 42.4% of the knee tears were ML tears, followed by associated (ACL with ML) tears, noted in 31.3%, and 26.3% were ACL tears. The tears were more frequent in the age group (31-40), reported in 35.3% (out of 99). There was no statistical association between the tears and the participants' age, gender, or sports activities; P value = 0.3, 0.5, and 0.9, respectively.

**Conclusion:** The study concluded that the isolated ML tears were more frequent than the associated (ACL with ML) tears—moreover, there was no significant statistical association between the participants' age, gender, or sports activities.

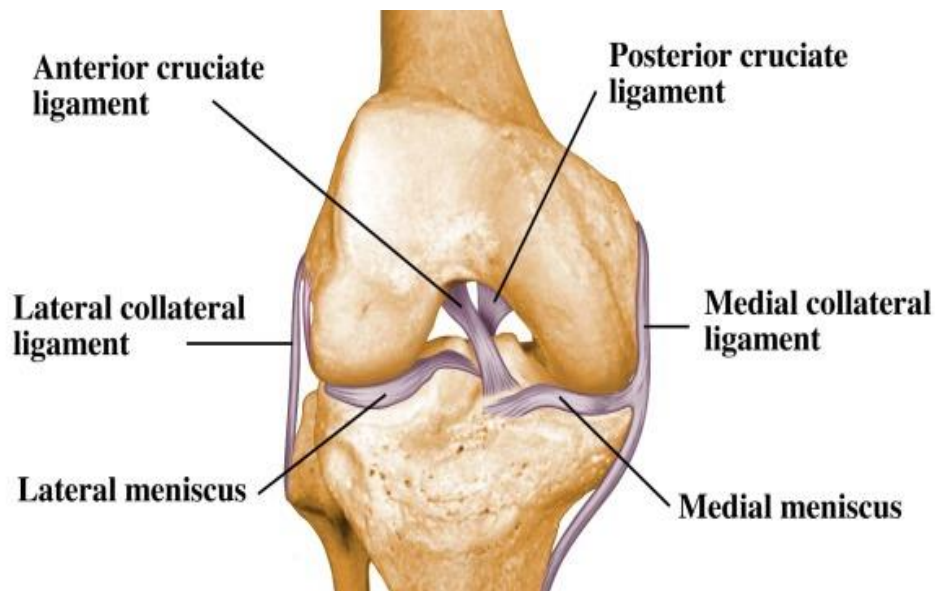
**Keywords:** Anterior; cruciate; meniscus; ligaments; tears; Saudi Arabia.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) and the meniscus ligament (ML) act as astatic stabilizers of the knee joint [1]. Meniscus injuries are associated with 77% of persistent ACL injuries [2]. Medial meniscal tears were more commonly associated with ACL tears [3]. Feucht MJ et al. [4]. concluded that 56% of the ACL tears were isolated, and 44% were associated with meniscal tears. ACL injuries were associated with severe negative long-term consequences, such as lower extremity dysfunction, low levels of physical activity, poor quality of life, and early development of knee osteoarthritis [5]. Magnetic

resonance imaging (MRI) has good sensitivity and specificity for diagnosing and classifying ACL and meniscal tears [6]. The combination of clinical tests and MRI images will give a precise diagnosis as well as surgical indication for meniscus injury in patients with anterior cruciate ligament tear [7].

This current retrospective study aimed to assess the incidence of ACL and associated tears in hospital (A) in Medina – (KSA) and to see the effect of sports activities on this incidence. Also, to see if there is an association between age/gender and the occurrence of the associated ACL and ML tears.



**Fig. 1. The knee joint's ligaments [8]**

## 2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

In a retrospective study, ninety-nine patients' knee MRI records were selected conveniently from (A) the hospital's picture archiving and communication system (PACS). The period of this search was from May 2023 to August 2023. All patients were scanned by 1.5T MRI machine using standard MRI knee scanning protocol; axial, coronal, and sagittal imaging planes were applied with a combination of fluid-sensitive sequences, either T2-weighted (T2W) fat-saturated (FS) or proton density-weighted (PDW) FS sequences. The inclusion criteria included patients with suspected anterior cruciate and meniscal ligament tears. Patients with posterior cruciate ligament (PCL) tear, medial collateral ligament (MCL) or lateral collateral ligament (LCL) injury, and previously operated index knees were excluded. The participants were divided into age groups (21-30, 31-40, 41- 50, and  $\geq 51$  years old). A structured data form was used to organize the study variables, which include the demographic information (age and gender), the sports activity, the site of the tear (Rt. /Lt Knee), the injured ligament (anterior cruciate / meniscus), the type of the tear, and the degree of the tear. An expert radiologist interpreted the MRI images.

### 2.1 Data Analysis

The study data were arranged and analyzed using Microsoft Excel (2021) and the statistical package for the social sciences (SPSS) program version 26 (IBM, Armonk, New York, USA). The categorical and continuous variables were presented as percentages, frequencies, and descriptive statistics. The cross-tabulations and chi-square test were applied to obtain the statistical associations between the study

variables. A statistical association was considered significant if the P-value was  $< 0.05$ .

## 3. RESULTS

The study included ninety-nine patients, 72 males and 27 females, with a mean age of  $33 \pm 2.43$ . The participants were categorized into four age groups; 35% were within the age group 31-40; Fig 2.

Table 1 & Fig 3 summarize the frequency of tears and a cross-tabulation of the types of tears with the participants' age groups; the knee tear was more frequent in the ML 42.4% (out of 99). 31.3% were associated tears (ACL with ML), and 26.3% were ACL tears. 35.3% of the tears were found in the age group (31-40). The Pearson Chi-square test indicated no statistical association between age and the occurrence of tear  $P = 0.3$ .

Table 2 summarizes a cross-tabulation between the types of tears and the degree of tears; partial tears were typical, had a frequency of 62.6%, and were more frequent in meniscal ligaments. Complete tears were found at 37.4%.

Table 3 summarizes the cross-tabulation between the participants' gender and the types of tears. However, 72.7 % of the tears were found in the males; the statistical analysis indicated that no statistical association was found between the participants' gender and the affected ligaments or the occurrence of the tears  $P = 0.5$ .

Table 4 shows a cross-tabulation between the participants' sports activities and the occurrence of tears; most tears (79.8 %) were found in those who had no sports activities. In addition, the Chi-square test showed no statistical association between sports activities and the occurrence of ACL or ML tears  $P = 0.92$ .

**Table 1. Participants' age groups and the types of tears cross-tabulation**

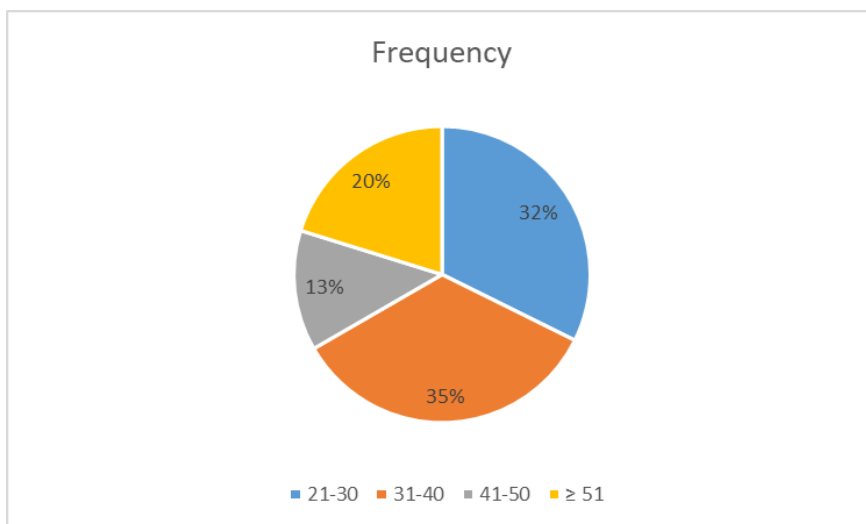
Age Groups	The types of tears			Total
	Isolated ACL tears	Isolated ML tears	Associated ML with ACL tears	
21-30	12	8	11	31
31-40	7	19	9	35
41-50	3	6	4	13
$\geq 51$	4	9	7	20
Total	26	42	31	99

**Table 2. Participants' gender and the types of tears cross-tabulation**

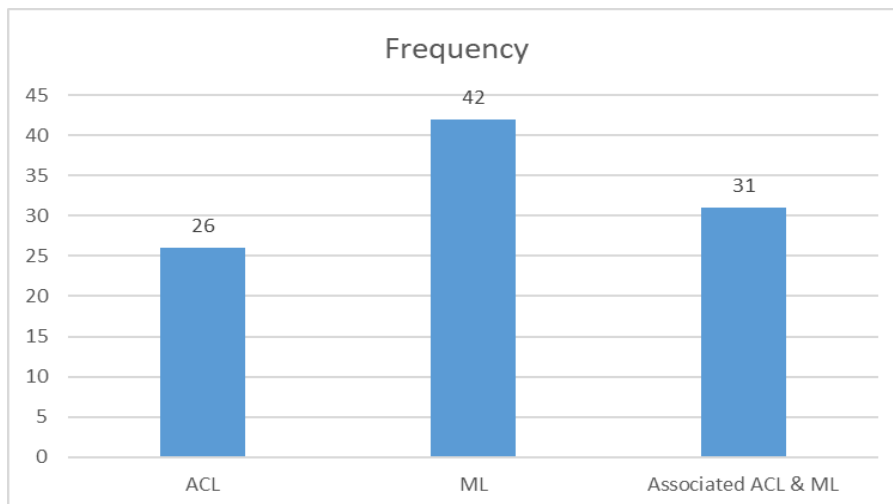
Gender	The types of tears			Total
	Isolated ACL tears	Isolated ML tears	Associated ML with ACL tears	
Female	5	13	9	27
Male	21	29	22	72
<b>Total</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>99</b>

**Table 3. Cross-tabulation between the degree of tears and the types of tears**

The degree of tears	The types of tears			Total
	Isolated ACL tears	Isolated ML tears	Associated ML with ACL tears	
Complete	9	18	10	37
Partial	17	24	21	62
<b>Total</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>99</b>



**Fig. 2. The frequency of the study participants' age groups**



**Fig. 3. The frequency of the types of tears**

**Table 4. Participants’ sports activities and the types of tears cross-tabulation**

Sports activities	The types of tears			Total
	ACL tears	ML tears	Associated ML with ACL tears	
No	21	34	24	79
Yes	5	8	7	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>99</b>

#### 4. DISCUSSION

This study aimed to assess the incidence of the associated ML with ACL tears in hospital A and to see the effect of sports activities in comparison between males and females

The current study indicated that the isolated ML tears were the more frequent knee joint tears; they occurred in 42.4% (out of 99), followed by the associated (ACL with ML) tears noted in 31.3% of the participants. The isolated ACL tears were found in 26.3% of the participants; See Table 1. These findings aligned with Hagmeijer MH et al. [9], who showed that secondary meniscal tears were noted among 33% of patients with delayed ACL injury reconstruction. Roman MD et al. [10] have a different result; they proposed that ML tears, associated with ACL injuries, have an incidence of (55–80%). The conclusion of other studies indicated a variety of opinions regarding this incidence; Venkataraman S et al. [2] suggested that ML tears were associated with 77% of ACL injuries, while Feucht MJ et al. [4] concluded that ML tears were associated with 44% of the ACL tears. Great attention should be taken during the arthroscopic assessment of ACL-injured patients. Kim SH et al. [11] indicated that the MRI could be a diagnostic tool for meniscus tears, but their classification of the type and location has limited accuracy. Machagge H et al. [12] also concluded that clinical examination is more accurate than MRI in diagnosing ACL and meniscal tears. Thus, patients may be scheduled for diagnostic and interventional arthroscopy if the clinical assessment reveals meniscal and ACL injuries.

Regarding the association of tears occurring with age, the study results indicated that tears were more frequent in ages 31-40; see Table 1. These results strongly agree with Michael Khadavi et al. [13], who showed that ACL tears are most common between the ages of 15 and 45.

Regarding the degree of tears, the current study proposed that partial tears were the most common type (62.6%), and they were more

frequent in meniscal ligaments; See Table 2. Seyma Torgutalp S et al. [14] have a different opinion; they suggested no significant differences between partial and complete tear groups regarding incidence rates of injuries accompanying the ACL tear. At the same time, Gupta R et al. [15] indicated that partial ACL injuries present less risk of acquiring isolated meniscus tears than complete ACL injuries.

Regarding the association between gender and the occurrence of tears, the study showed no statistical association, but tears were more frequent in males; see Table 3. These findings did not agree with Astur DC et al. [16], who concluded that women presented a higher risk of developing ACL and meniscal injuries.

Regarding the association between sports activities and the occurrence of tears, the study concluded that 79.8 % were noted in participants who had no sports activities. At the same time, no statistical association between sports activities and the occurrence of tears was found; See Table 4. These findings disagree with Khadavi M [17], who proposed that sports injuries are the most common cause of ACL tears. The community culture may affect the frequency of sports activities; very few people have sports activities here in the KSA. Also, the majority of those who have sports activities were male. From this study, among the females, only 33% (out of 27) have sports activities, while the rest, 66.6% (out of 27) have no sports activities.

#### 5. LIMITATIONS

The limitations of this current study include the small sample size, the retrospective nature of the survey, and some data regarding the participant’s body mass index (BMI) or other possible comorbidity illnesses.

#### 6. CONCLUSION

The study concluded that the isolated ML tears were more frequent than the associated (ACL with ML) tears. No significant statistical



association between the participants' age, gender, or sports activities was noted. Great attention should be paid to the use of MRI in diagnosing ACL and ML tears and during the arthroscopic assessment of ACL-injured patients. Further prospective studies in the KSA with an extensive enough sample size regarding this issue were recommended.

## CONSENT

The confidentiality of the participants' information was guaranteed by de-identifying the study data; the researchers did not show any personal data about the participants' names, phone numbers, photos, or unique IDs.

## ETHICAL APPROVAL

As per international standards or university standards written ethical approval has been collected and preserved by the author(s).

## COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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