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Charcot Cyst: A Rarely Reported Finding

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Purpose: Charcot arthropathy is a debilitating condition affecting the lower extremity of persons with long established peripheral neuropathy. Deformities of the midfoot can place the foot at risk of ulceration and subsequent amputation if infection ensues. Although surgical management has become much more common for this disorder, there has been little if any mention of a peculiar cystic proliferation noted in the deep soft tissues upon surgical dissection. We herein report our observations on several patients who were found to have what we have termed "Charcot Cysts" **Methods/Results:** Two type 2 diabetic patients are presented who reported to our High Risk Foot Clinic with acute Charcot arthropathy of the midfoot. As per our customary treatment, the patients were placed in total contact casts (TCC) and were restricted from weight bearing until they were felt to have reached the quiescent (chronic stage). Both had developed a modest midfoot deformity with collapse of the midfoot and loss of calcaneal inclination. Although they were provided with therapeutic footwear appropriate for their condition, both subsequently went on to develop midfoot ulceration. Despite further casting, their ulcers remained recalcitrant to conservative care. Each was taken to surgery for a simple plantar exostectomy to reduce the plantar bony prominence underlying the ulceration. Upon deep exploration a translucent, fluctuant, multi-loculated cystic mass was encountered that extended throughout a good portion of the dissection. Upon resection, the masses were found to be spongy and contained what appeared to be synovial fluid. Pathology confirmed that these were simple benign cysts. Importantly, however, we found a delay in wound healing because of persistent synovial fluid leakage. **Conclusions:** This rarely reported complication of the diabetic Charcot foot has been noted by the senior author (RGF) in many such operative patients over the last several decades. Since most patients with Charcot foot are treated conservatively, these cysts are not usually recognized clinically. Once the foot becomes ulcerated or is treated surgically, however, the Charcot cysts can impede normal wound healing. We encourage clinicians and surgeons to corroborate our findings with further study of this interesting pathology.