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■ INFOGRAPHIC

Infographic: The Orthopaedic Trauma Society classification of open fractures

Open fractures can have a significant impact on patients' physical and mental wellbeing.¹ These injuries are associated with large healthcare costs²⁻⁴ and several classification systems have been proposed to enable prediction of prognosis.^{5,6} The Orthopaedic Trauma Society (OTS) open fracture classification was developed to address some of the problems associated with the existing classification systems: specifically, the use of descriptive terminology, which leads to misclassification,⁷ and the lack of evidence linking previous classifications to outcomes, which patients consider the most important.⁸

The OTS classification is based on objective descriptors of the injury after the first surgical excision (debridement). Injuries are broadly categorized as 'simple' or 'complex', based on the need for a reconstructive procedure to achieve wound closure. 'Simple' open fractures can be closed primarily without an additional reconstructive procedure. Conversely, 'complex' fractures are those which require some form of bony, soft-tissue, or vascular reconstruction to achieve wound closure and are subdivided into types A to C.

The OTS classification was investigated using a cohort of adults with open fractures of the lower limb, who were recruited as part of two large clinical trials within the UK Major Trauma Network.^{9,10} Using high-quality, prospective data, this analysis shows that the classification correlates with patient-reported disability and patient-reported quality of life in the first 12 months after the injury. However, it was not correlated with deep surgical site infection at 30 days post-injury. Further work is required to test the intra- and inter-observer reliability of this classification system, and to correlate the classification with patient-centred outcomes in different patient groups and other healthcare systems.

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