Lateral Plating of Phalangeal Fractures

Soumen Das De, MBBS, FRCSEd (Ortho), MPH
Associate Consultant, Department of Hand & Reconstructive Microsurgery
National University Health System, Singapore

Synopsis
Phalangeal fractures pose a challenging clinical dilemma. They are extremely common injuries, there are multiple methods of non-operative and operative treatment, and the outcomes are often less than ideal. The hand surgeon has to constantly balance the often conflicting requirements for rigid skeletal stabilization, healthy soft tissue gliding planes and early joint mobilization. At the center of this triad is the proximal interphalangeal joint (PIPJ) – the key to finger function. Lateral plating of phalangeal fractures is a less commonly used method for treating these injuries. Compared to conventional dorsal plating, lateral plating offers the theoretical advantages of minimal disturbance to the extensor tendon and soft tissue gliding mechanism, reduced risk of flexor tendon irritation from prominent screws, and a more acceptable, concealed scar. This presentation will cover the indications for lateral plating, describe the surgical technique and offer technical tips to obtain a good clinical outcome and avoid complications. The subsequent part of the talk will review the results of lateral plating and compare it with conventional dorsal plating. Finally, the speaker will discuss additional factors that influence outcome after surgical treatment of phalangeal fractures.