

## Clinical Imaging

# Discovery of decades-old acupuncture needle fragments during routine care for an arm injury

An 89-year-old man fell down in a house and was brought to our hospital with a bleeding injury to the right elbow. Vital signs on arrival at the emergency room were normal except for blood pressure. Abrasion on the lateral right elbow and laceration of the radial side of the right forearm were identified, but no foreign bodies were evident around those wounds. He also complained of hitting his head, but no trauma was apparent. Computed tomography of the head showed no abnormalities other than old infarction. Thirteen stitches were needed for the laceration of the right forearm. Radiography of the right arm revealed numerous radiodense foreign bodies around the right elbow joint (Fig. 1A, anteroposterior X-ray; Fig. 1B, lateral X-ray; Fig. 1C, computed tomography). These bodies were initially thought to be foreign body fragments due to trauma, or debris on the X-ray film. Careful interview of the patient revealed a history of acupuncture therapy for right arm pain and numbness approximately 50 years previously.

The insertion of small pieces of sterile needle around the joint has commonly been used in the treatment of painful arthritis in Asian countries.<sup>1,2</sup> These needles were left because they had been harmless for many years.

## DISCLOSURE



Approval of the research protocol: N/A.

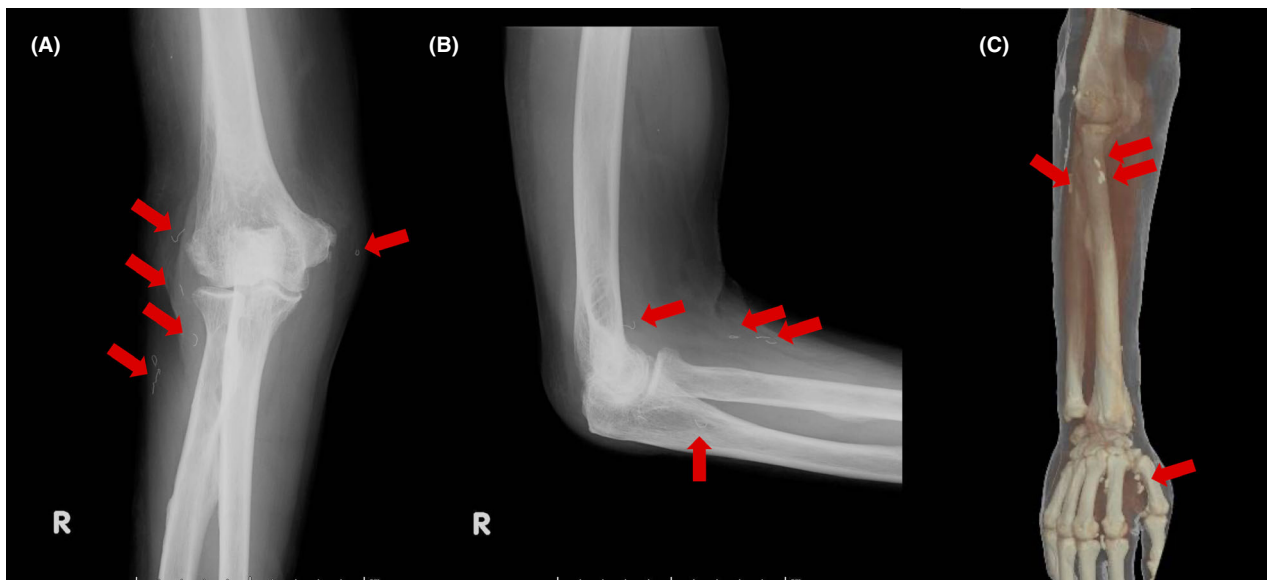
Informed consent: The patient and his wife provided written, informed consent for publication of the details of this case.

Registry and the registration no. of the study/trial: N/A.

Animal studies: N/A.

Conflict of interest: None.

Koshi Ota,  Hiroki Yokoyama, and Akira Takasu   
Department of Emergency Medicine, Osaka Medical  
College, Takatsuki City, Japan  
E-mail: emm006@osaka-med.ac.jp



**Fig. 1.** Radiography of the right arm of an 89-year-old man treated for injury to the right elbow. A, Anteroposterior X-ray of the right elbow. Numerous radiodense foreign bodies are seen around the elbow joint (arrows). B, Lateral X-ray of the right elbow. Numerous radiodense foreign bodies are again seen around the elbow joint, most near the surface of the skin (arrows). C, Computed tomography of the right arm shows several foreign bodies (arrows).

## REFERENCES

- 1 Studd RC, Stewart PJ. Images in clinical medicine. Intraabdominal abscess after acupuncture. *N. Engl. J. Med.* 2004;350:1763.
- 2 Yoo H-G, Yoo W-H. Images in clinical medicine. Acupuncture with gold thread for osteoarthritis of the knee. *N. Engl. J. Med.* 2013;369:e37.