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Minimally Invasive Radiofrequency Ablation Successfully Removes Teen Drummer's Painful Benign Bone Tumor

LOS ANGELES - Avery Burton of Los Angeles was a typical busy teenager who taught karate, was a talented drummer for his high school marching band, and in his spare time, was a drummer for the rock band, "The Blame."

When he started to experience hip and knee pain at night, he at first thought it was the price he was forced to pay for having such an active lifestyle. What he didn't know was that after living with the worsening pain for six months, he would become the first patient to undergo a new non-surgical technique at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center to treat a certain type of tumor called osteoid osteoma.

Burton waited several weeks before he finally divulged the escalating pain to his parents. They took him from doctor to doctor where he received myriad tests, a couple of different diagnoses and suggestions for various surgical procedures.

Eventually, a family friend referred Burton to Cedars-Sinai Medical Center where a bone scan at the S. Mark Taper Foundation Imaging Center showed an abnormality in his right femur (the long bone in the thigh). A CT scan identified a small lesion in the same area. The diagnosis was osteoid osteoma, a benign bone tumor that typically affects teenagers and young adults and is more common among males than females. The cause of osteoid osteoma tumors is unknown.

An upside to Burton's osteoid osteoma was that it could be fixed through surgery. On the downside, the surgery would have put him on crutches for up to three months, which was not an attractive option for the active 17-year-old athlete and musician.

Burton's final referral was to see Thomas J. Leach, M.D., attending radiologist at Cedars-Sinai's S. Mark Taper Foundation Imaging Center, an expert and published author in the field of musculoskeletal imaging, according to the hospital.

Burton became the first patient to undergo radiofrequency ablation on an osteoid osteoma at Cedars-Sinai said the hospital. The minimally invasive procedure was booked for the following week.

In radiofrequency ablation (RFA), an ablation needle is directed to the exact center of the tumor site using imaging techniques such as a CT scan. The needle transmits an electrical current (radio-frequency energy) that generates heat and destroys the lesion.

Until now, besides invasive surgery, the only other treatment available has been the "wait-and-see approach," which involves waiting for several months to see if the tumor might go away on its own while managing the patient's pain with anti-inflammatory medications, such as aspirin or nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs).

"RFA technology is becoming more popular and is an excellent choice for most patients with osteoid osteoma," Dr. Leach said.

For the first time in six months, Burton woke-up the day after his procedure pain-free. He was back at school the next day. He mentions that he didn't require his prescription pain medications; Tylenol took care of the minimal discomfort.

"It feels great to be back to my active life," he said. "And, the scar was gone in less than two weeks."

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