

# A Penetrating Injury Landscape of Cock Fight Among Humans: A Single Institutional Experience in a Peripheral Medical College of Eastern India

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## ABSTRACT

**Introduction:** In cockfight, birds are equipped with metal spurs, tied to the leg. Game roosters are trained in such a way that they can fight to death. Spectators and ringmasters often get injured accidentally at the time of this game. Our aim of the study was to evaluate the spectrum and severity of such kind of injury.

**Material and methods:** A Cohort Study was conducted over last 30 months at In-patient of Midnapore Medical College on all the patients (n=17) admitted with injury by knives attached to the leg of cocks. Individual interview based on predesigned case- record proforma, clinical examination, per-operative findings have been used in this study.

**Results:** The mean age at presentation was 40.5 years (range 24-56 years) with the majority of being males. Majority of the injuries 76% (13 out of 17) occurred among the spectators, other 4 (24%) injuries occurred among the ring masters. Most common site of injury being the lower limb (9) followed by upper limb. Rate of injury to tendons (12 out of 17 patients) is much higher comparable to vascular/ neural injury. Single case of death found following carotid artery injury.

**Conclusion:** Due to lack of knowledge about the severity, nature of the injury and higher incidence of concealed haemorrhage, smaller entry wound most of the patients present late. Some patients present after skin suturing from local medicine shops without any wound exploration leading to higher rate of complications. Managing such cases requires adequate experience, skills and infrastructure in tendon, vascular and neural repair.

**Keywords:** Penetrating Injury, Cock Fight, Death Game, Accidental Injury.

## INTRODUCTION

A cockfight is an ancient blood-shed game, held in a ring called a cockpit. The history of raising rooster for fighting goes back 6,000 years. The first documented use of the word "game-cock", denoting use of the cock as to a "game", a sport, pastime or entertainment, was recorded in 1634,<sup>1</sup> after the term "cock of the game" used by George Wilson, in the earliest known book on the sport of cockfighting in *The Commendation of Cocks and Cock Fighting* in 1607. History shows this ancient spectator game was quite popular from the Indus valley civilization to the Harappan-Mohenjo-daro culture.<sup>2,3</sup> Though the Supreme Court of India has banned cockfighting as a violation of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, (cognizable offence under Section 11)<sup>4,5,6</sup> but it remains popular, especially in West Bengal and rural coast

of Andhra Pradesh, with large amount of betting involved, especially around the festival of Sankranti as well as in the new year or local festival.(fig 1,2)

In some regional variations, the birds are equipped with either metal spurs (called *gaffs*) or knives, tied to the leg in the area where the bird's natural spur has been partially removed. A *cockspur* is a bracelet (often made of leather) with a curved, sharp spike which is attached to the leg of the bird. The spikes typically range in length from "short spurs" of just over an inch to "long spurs" almost two and a half inches long (2.5-7.5cm) (fig. 3,4). Game roosters are fed, trained in such a way that they can fight to death. The cock that dies in such fights is usually the prize for the winner's owner. In contests, winners get cash prizes ranging from Rs 500 to Rs 2,500. Spectators, especially the ring masters often get injured accidentally at the time of this game. (fig-4). Though size of entry wound of the injury is usually very small, but the grade of the injury is grave. Several cases of death have been reported in various parts of India.<sup>7,8</sup> Our aim of the study is to evaluate the spectrum of such 'not so rare' kind of injury and know their severity.

## MATERIAL AND METHODS

A Cohort Study was conducted over last 30 months (from June 2018 to January 2021) at In- patient and out-patient department of Department of General Surgery of Midnapore Medical College, Midnapore (W) on all the patients (n=17) with injury by knife or spurs attached to the leg of cocks admitted or attended in OPD in the study area based on inclusion

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**How to cite this article:** Mondal B, Maiti KB, Kar M, Sanyal K, Majee P, Pal M. A penetrating injury landscape of cock fight among humans: a single institutional experience in a peripheral medical College of Eastern India. International Journal of Contemporary Medical Research 2021;8(9):11-15.

**DOI:** <http://dx.doi.org/10.21276/ijcmr.2021.8.9.11>



and exclusion criteria. Individual (one-to-one) interview based on predesigned case- record pro forma, clinical examination, per-operative findings has been used in this study and the fund for doing the required investigations has been met in parts by the government. The patients with cock fight injury, who attended in the emergency department after initial resuscitation the casualty, were admitted and managed under the surgical department. All patients who attended the casualty underwent local wound exploration done under regional anaesthesia for identification and managing spectrum of injury accordingly. Necessary x-rays were done, but colour doppler study could not be done (in emergency set up) due to lack of infrastructure. The clinical presentations, injury report, treatment modality and complications of all these patients were analysed.

**RESULTS**

The statistical software SPSS version 20 was used for the analysis.

The mean age at presentation was 40.5 years (range 24-56 years) with the majority of being males (16 males and 1 female). Majority of the injuries 76% (13 out of 17) occurs among the spectators, other 4 (24%) injuries occurred among the ring masters.

Most common site of injury being the lower limb (9 cases), (fig 5,6) followed by upper limb (5 cases),(fig 7) though

Annexure	Proforma
<b>Patient particular</b>	
1. Sl. No.	
2. Age (in years)	
3. Sex-Male(M)/Female(F)	
4. Spectator(S)/ring master(R)	
<b>Injury report</b>	
1. Site of injury -upper limb (UL)/ lower limb (LL)/ abdomen (ABD)/ trunk (TR)/Head-Neck-Face (HNF)	
2. Depth of penetration (in cm)	
3. Entry wound width (in cm)	
<b>Per-operative finding</b>	
1. Vascular injury - Yes(Y)/No(N)	
2. External haemorrhage- Yes(Y)/No(N)	
3. Nerve injury - Yes(Y)/No(N)	
4. Complete transection of nerve- Yes(Y)/No(N)	
5. Tendon /Muscular injury- Yes(Y)/No(N)	
6. Other Intra-op finding – if any	
<b>Post operative outcome</b>	
1. Wound infection- Yes(Y)/No(N)	
2. Neural deficit- Yes(Y)/No(N)	
3. Vascular deficit - Yes(Y)/No(N)	



Figure-1 and 2: Ring masters hosting the cock fight (images are blurred intentionally)



Figure-3: Showing metallic spurs of different sizes;

Figure-4: Showing metallic spurs are being attached to the leg of rooster before fight

single cases of injury to head-neck-face, trunk, abdomen were found. (Table 1). Average depth of penetration 3.75 cm (range 2-6 cms).

Average entry wound width is 1.5 cm (range being 1-2cms)

which corresponds to the diameter of the spur attached to the legs of rooster. Out of 17 cases vascular injury was found in 10 cases (58.8%) and out of these 10 cases only 2 cases had external hemorrhage, other 8 cases had concealed

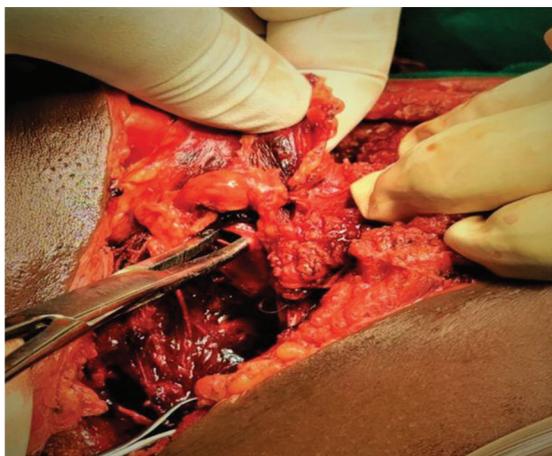
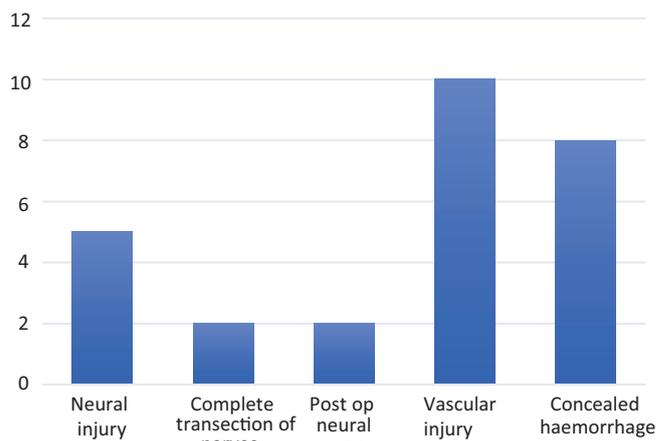


Figure-5: Showing 2 cm entry wound at anterolateral aspect of thigh

Figure-6: Immediate emergency exploration of the wound reveals minor vascular injury with muscular injury



Figure-7: Wound exploration image of a rooster fight injury showing partial radial artery injury in right forearm



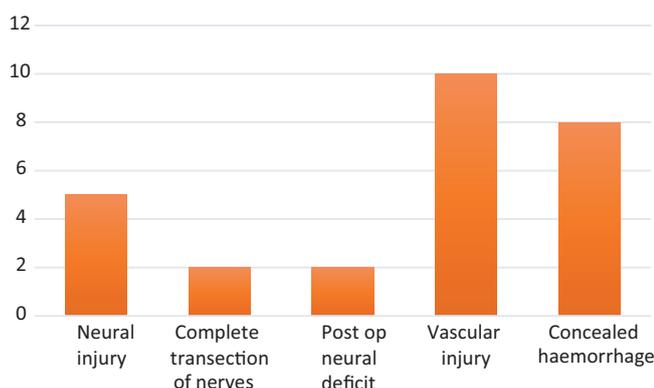
Graph-1: Clustered column diagram showing count and site of injury

Site of injury	Count of site of injury
Abdomen	1
Head Neck Face	1
Lower limb	9
Trunk	1
Upper limb	5

Table-1:

Spectrum of injury	Number	Percentage	Total
Neural injury	5	29.4	17
Complete transection of nerves	2	11.8	
Post op neural deficit	2	11.8	
Vascular injury	10	58.8	
Concealed haemorrhage	8	47	
Post op vascular deficit	0	0	
Tendon injury	12	70.6	

Table-2:



**Graph-2:** Clustered column diagram showing extent of injury

hemorrhage, which became evident after wound exploration. Among 17 cases 5 cases (29.41%) had nerve injury, out of 5 cases of injury to nerves 2 cases were found to be complete transection of nerves in per-operative setting.

Rate of injury to tendons is much higher comparable to vascular/ neural injury. 12 (70%) out of 17 patients were to have injured tendons. In postoperative follow up 6 cases (35%) had local wound infection, which was managed conservatively. 2 patients (11%) had features of post op neural deficit (Table 2). No patient had features of post op vascular deficit.

A single case of death was noted following injury to right side of neck.

## DISCUSSION

Most of the victims of penetrating cock fight spur injuries were of the young- and middle-aged groups who were in the prime of their lives and 95% of them are male (16 out of 17). Ring masters are highly prone to this injury as the controls the fight. Usually in the days of regional festivals near about 500-600 people gather to watch the roosters to fight. Betting on the survivor in the death match is the main attraction of this blood game.

Ring masters bind the metallic spur at about 90° to the posterior aspect of legs of the roosters. Game roosters are not able to fly for long distance. Injuries are more common in lower legs of the spectators or ring masters. Entry wound of the injury site is usually 1-2cm width, and mostly associated with concealed hemorrhage. So, in many cases, patients attend hospital late sometimes after 2-4 days. In the meantime, they usually attend local practitioners' clinic or medicine shops for bandage or suturing. Without exploration and further investigation of the wound only skin gets sutured, hence complication develops.

Sometimes poisons are applied to the spurs attached to the legs of roosters for quick win. This is even more dangerous in cases.

Delayed presentation and ignorance about this death-game even in some practitioners lead to higher rate of complications.

We thoroughly cleaned the wound with normal saline immediately after admission and checked for vitals and distal pulses (clinically and with pulse oximeters), neurological

deficit (if any) and movement of suspected muscles (for any associated tendon injury. After initial resuscitation and administration of broad-spectrum antibiotics we performed X -rays of the affected site in all cases, but due to lack of availability of colour doppler Ultrasonography we were unable to determine the extent of vascular injury preoperatively. We found a single case of abdominal injury with evidence of peritoneal breach, so we had performed emergency exploratory laparotomy, but no gut or solid organ injury was identified.

Extremity injuries were managed accordingly after local wound exploration. Arterial injuries were managed according to the protocol and anastomosed with 6-0/7-0 polypropylene. But nerve injuries were referred to higher centers with plastic surgery emergency after marking the neural ends with silk sutures.

A single case of death noted following such penetrating trauma to right side of neck. That patient expired within 5-10 minutes of admission. At the time of admission patient was in Grade IV hemorrhagic shock and we did not get enough time to resuscitate and explore the wound. The suspected source of bleeding was right carotid vessels.

Several cases of death have been observed in various regions of India, mostly because of neck injury (injury to great vessels of neck).

## CONCLUSION

Accidental penetrating trauma due to metallic spurs attached to the legs of rooster during death game is not so uncommon type of surgical emergency affecting particularly young and middle aged males. The commonest site of injury is injury to lower limbs. Due to lack of knowledge about the severity, nature of the injury and higher incidence of concealed hemorrhage, smaller entry wound most of the patients present late. Some patients present after skin suturing from local medicine shops without any wound exploration. As a result, incidence of complication is high. Managing such cases requires adequate experience, skills and infrastructure in tendon, vascular and neural repair. The best mode of management must be tailor made for each individual based on the nature of injury, findings at presentation, timing of presentation and associated neural, vascular and tendon injury.

After visiting the site, we, the authors noticed that there were no medical personnel, ambulance present. Neither animal right activists nor local authorities raise any objection regarding this event. This continues to take place year after year in large scale, especially during Sankranti, even though strict laws against animal cruelty are in place.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We would like to thank the hospital authorities, nursing personnel, and other supportive staff for their continuous support in the patient care.

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**Source of Support:** Nil; **Conflict of Interest:** None

**Submitted:** 25-08-2021; **Accepted:** 05-09-2021; **Published:** 30-09-2021