

Publication

Functional and Structural Details about the Fabella: What the Important Stabilizer Looks Like in the Central European Population

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Author(s) Hauser, Nicole Helene; Hoechel, Sebastian; Toranelli, Mireille; Klaws, Joerg; Muller-Gerbl, Magdalena

Author(s) at UniBasel [Müller-Gerbl, Magdalena](#) ;

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The posterolateral corner of the knee accommodating the fabella complex is of importance in orthopaedic surgery. Unfortunately, there is a lack of data in literature for clinical routine. Therefore, we investigated the fabella's characteristics, biomechanical nature, and present histologic details. Of special interest were the fabella's occurrence and position, calcium concentration as long-term load intake indicator, and the histology. Within our analysis, fabellae were found in 30.0% of all datasets, located on the upper part of the posterolateral femoral condyle. The region of fabella contact on this condyle showed a significantly lower calcium concentration than its surroundings. Histologically, the fabella showed no articular cartilage but a clearly distinguishable fabellofibular ligament that consisted of two bundles: one, as already described in literature inserted at the fibular tip, and another part newly described on the top of the lateral meniscus. In its role of stabilizing the soft tissue structures of the posterolateral knee, the fabella seems to serve as suspension for the ligaments evolving from its base. Even though a joint formation of any kind is unlikely, the presence of a fabella needs to be kept in mind during knee examination and any surgical procedures.

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