Reviewer’s report

**Title:** The Ilizarov external fixator - a useful alternative for the treatment of proximal tibial fractures A prospective observational study of 30 consecutive patients

**Version:** 5  **Date:** 9 December 2012

**Reviewer:** Yuan-Kun Tu

**Reviewer’s report:**

This study really proposed a minimally invasive surgery for patients with tibial plateau fracture. Furthermore, authors reported reasonable radiographic outcomes in addition to successful clinical improvements in pain and function.

According to the literature, staged operations were recommended for high-energy tibial plateau fractures. An Ilizarov-type device is highly versatile and reproducible. It maintains the reduction of fractures, eliminates the need for implanted hardware, and provides a stable platform for soft tissue reconstruction. Besides its many advantages, the main disadvantages of the Ilizarov method are the lengthy treatment times and the long-term disabilities associated with it. It also has theoretical risks that can occur, even in experienced hands, including pin infections or loosening, neurovascular injury, muscular damage, articular injury, persistent pain, and scarring.

**Minor Essential Revisions**

In this series, arthrotomy or arthroscopy was not used. However, severe (more than 5mm) articular step-off was found in 3 patients. Is the risk of articular step-off relatively high or acceptable?

**Level of interest:** An article of limited interest

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests.