

# Comparison of Modular Neck Stem and Nonmodular Neck Stem in Primary Total Hip Arthroplasty: Findings of a Meta-Analysis

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**Abstract:** Modular neck stem in total hip arthroplasty (THA) can offer variable option to reconstruct hip anatomy. However, concerns have been raised about the higher risk of revision of modular neck stem due to corrosion recently. We conducted this meta-analysis to supply a quantitative evaluation regarding this issue. We systematically searched PubMed, the Cochrane Library, EMBASE, Web of Science, Scopus, EBSCO from inception to January 2021. The trials comparing the survivorship and complications between modular-neck THA and nonmodular-neck THA were involved in the analysis. 6 studies with 820523 participants were included. The outcomes of meta-analysis revealed that there were no significant differences between modular neck stem and nonmodular neck stem in revision rate (RR, 1.43; 95% CI, 0.99 to 2.04;  $P < 0.00001$ ), dislocation rate (RR, 1.38; 95% CI, 0.3 to 2.36;  $P < 0.0001$ ) and infection rate (RR, 1.12; 95% CI, 0.94 to 1.34;  $P = 0.59$ ). The utility of modular neck stem in THA offers similar survivorship compared to nonmodular neck stem. Current study demonstrated that utilization of modular neck stem is a reasonable choice in primary THA.

**Keywords:** Total Hip Arthroplasty, Modular Neck Stem, Revision Rate, Meta-Analysis

## 1. Introduction

Total hip arthroplasty (THA) is the safe and effective treatment for patients suffering end-stage hip disorders, since it is able to relieve pain and improve joint function<sup>[1]</sup>. Its high success rate and proven outcomes come along with higher expectations. Improvement of joint functionality is the further advance in the successes of total hip arthroplasty. Reconstruction of the anatomical parameters of the hip, such as hip center, femoral offset and leg length, is critical in order to obtain satisfied hip function<sup>[2, 3]</sup>. The introduction of modular neck prostheses in THA is aimed to precisely reproduce the natural biomechanics of hip joint with various versions of neck. Modular femoral neck designs can allow the surgeon to adjust leg length, offset, anteversion, head center and neck-shaft angle flexibly compared with nonmodular neck stem. Its benefit potentially leads to optimal soft-tissues balance and greater hip functionality, particularly for patients with difficult anatomies. Furthermore, accurate restoration of hip anatomical parameters has been proposed to reduce the impingement and the dislocation rate.

However, the additional modular junction could raise extra concerns, including the corrosion at the neck-stem junction, implant fracture, and adverse local tissue reactions<sup>[4-6]</sup>. Recently, the ABG II and Rejuvenate modular neck stems (Stryker, Kalamazoo, Michigan) were recalled voluntarily because revision rate was higher than expected<sup>[7]</sup>. Few studies have found that mechanical wear of modular neck stems when subjected to load fretting analysis<sup>[8, 9]</sup>. Corrosion and breakage of modular neck stems has also been frequently reported in revision surgery in terms of intraoperative findings<sup>[7, 10]</sup>. The Australian Orthopaedic Association National Joint Replacement Registry demonstrated that the revision rate of modular neck stem THAs was almost two-fold in long-term follow-up when compared to nonmodular neck stem THAs<sup>[11]</sup>. Despite these concerns, some authors have urged caution when considering all types of modular neck stems as alike<sup>[12, 13]</sup>. A number of studies have reported on decent clinical outcomes and satisfied survival rate<sup>[14-17]</sup>, especially for total hip arthroplasties with ceramic-on-ceramic (CoC) bearings<sup>[14]</sup>. There are diversities in modular designs, materials and other parameters with the potential to decisively influence outcomes. For instance, adverse local tissue reaction (ALTR) has not been found

in THAs with titanium-titanium modular neck <sup>[18]</sup>.

So far, there is a relative scarcity of studies that investigated the differences in the survival rate between modular neck stems and nonmodular neck stems, with no large randomized controlled trials having been researched. To our knowledge, no meta-analysis has been performed regarding this topic. For filling a gap in knowledge, we conducted this meta-analysis to evaluate whether the revision rate is significantly different between modular neck stems and nonmodular neck stems for primary THA. Additionally, the differences of some complications such as dislocation rate and infection rate between two femoral stem designs are discovered according to available data.

## 2. Materials and Methods

### 2.1 Search Strategy

This systematic review and meta-analysis has been performed according to the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (Prisma) guidelines <sup>[19]</sup>. The review protocol was registered with the International Prospective Register of Systematic Reviews (PROSPERO) on 26 September 2020 and finally registered on 27 October 2020 (CRD42020211336). We searched PubMed, the Cochrane Library, EMBASE, Web of Science, Scopus, EBSCO and Web of science from inception to January 2021 for comparative studies involving the survivorship and complications of THAs with modular neck stems and nonmodular neck stems. The search strategy comprised the following free text terms and MeSH terms relevant to modular neck, exchangeable neck, hip, replacement, arthroplasty and THA. Medical Subject Headings were used in all searches since it was accessible. Moreover, we searched the involved studies and their reference lists to obtain any potentially related articles. Two reviewers finished all the searches individually.

### 2.2 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

We selected studies if they met the following inclusion criteria: (1) comparative study design; (2) patients undergoing primary total hip arthroplasty with modular neck stems and nonmodular neck stems; (3) reported at least one outcome of revision rates and complications such as dislocation and infection.

We excluded studies based on the following criteria: (1) duplicate references; (2) letters, comments, meeting abstract and practice guidelines; (3) data was deficient or inaccessible. Two reviewers separately filtered the titles and abstracts to recognized possibly relevant studies. Full-text papers of include studies were acquired to evaluate additionally after filtering the titles and abstracts of the identified articles. Decision was draw by third senior reviewer as long as disagreement presented.

### 2.3 Data Extraction and Quality Assessment

*Table 1 Characteristics of the included studies*

Study,year	Country	Cases: modular neck group/ nonmodular neck group	Age: modular neck group/ nonmodular neck group (year)	Female: modular neck group/ nonmodular neck group	Follow -up (month )	Study design	Neck metal	MINORS criteria score
AOANJRR 2020 [45]	Australia	10286/41085 5	NA	NA	NA	Retrospective cohort	NA	15
Colas, 2017	France	8931/315177	NA	5180/195410	47	Retrospective	NA	19

[30]						cohort		
Duwelius,	America	594/284	62/62	282/136	29	Retrospective	Titanium	20
2014 [21]						cohort		
Fitch, 2015	Italy	692/73469	64,1/67.7	394/43346	108	Retrospective	Titanium	20
[13]						cohort		
Gerhardt,	Netherlan	95/95	64.5/65.4	NA	12	Retrospective	Titanium	19
2014 [22]	ds					cohort		
Vendittoli,	Canada	13/32	59.3/53.8	2/9	43.2	Retrospective	CoCr	19
2018 [23]						cohort		

NA: Not applicable; MINORS: The Methodological Index for Non-Randomized Studies.

Data was extracted from the finally included studies by two reviewers. A well-designed data extraction excel database was used for data collection. The recorded items were as follow: general characteristics (first author, publication year, number of participants, age and other baseline characteristics), type of neck alloy, and outcomes of interest (revision rates, dislocation rates, infection rates). We estimated the qualities of the studies with the application of Methodological Index for Non-Randomised Studies (MINORS) <sup>[20]</sup> (Table 1). MINORS is a valid instrument to assess the methodological quality of studies. The eight-item checklist and twelve-item checklist are scored for non-comparative studies and comparative respectively. Scoring includes 0 = not-reported, 1 = reported but inadequate, or 2 = reported and adequate. Disagreements between the two authors were resolved by third senior author's decision (Table 1).

## 2.4 Data Synthesis

Data analyses were conducted through RevMan software (version 5.3, Cochrane Collaboration, Oxford, UK). If there were continuous data, the weighted mean difference (WMD) was calculated to evaluate the efficacy of intervention. If there were dichotomous data, we calculated relative risks (RR) and 95% confidence intervals (CI) for each outcome. I<sup>2</sup> statistics were applied to identify the presence of heterogeneity among studies. Substantial heterogeneity was measured when I<sup>2</sup> value was 50% or higher. A fixed-effects model was performed if the heterogeneity examination presented no statistical significance (I<sup>2</sup><50%, P>0.1). Or else, the random-effects model was used. We considered P< 0.05 as statistically significant. Publication bias was assessed using funnel plots. Sensitivity analysis was conducted to assess the effect of a separate study by eliminating in a random sequence.

## 3. Results

### 3.1 Search results

After global searching, 1025 references were identified. 387 duplicates were discarded and 587 studies were removed after screening the titles and abstracts. According to inclusion and exclusion criteria, 45 trials were removed after reviewing full-text literature. Among excluded articles, despite the subject of study was regarding the comparison between modular neck stems and nonmodular neck stems, the trial published Mikkelsen et al in 2017 <sup>[21]</sup> did not reported the revision rate of THAs with two designs. Similarly, the finding of Archibeck et al <sup>[22]</sup> was deficient of available data about revision rate as well. Eventually, 6 trials were included into our meta-analysis (Fig 1).

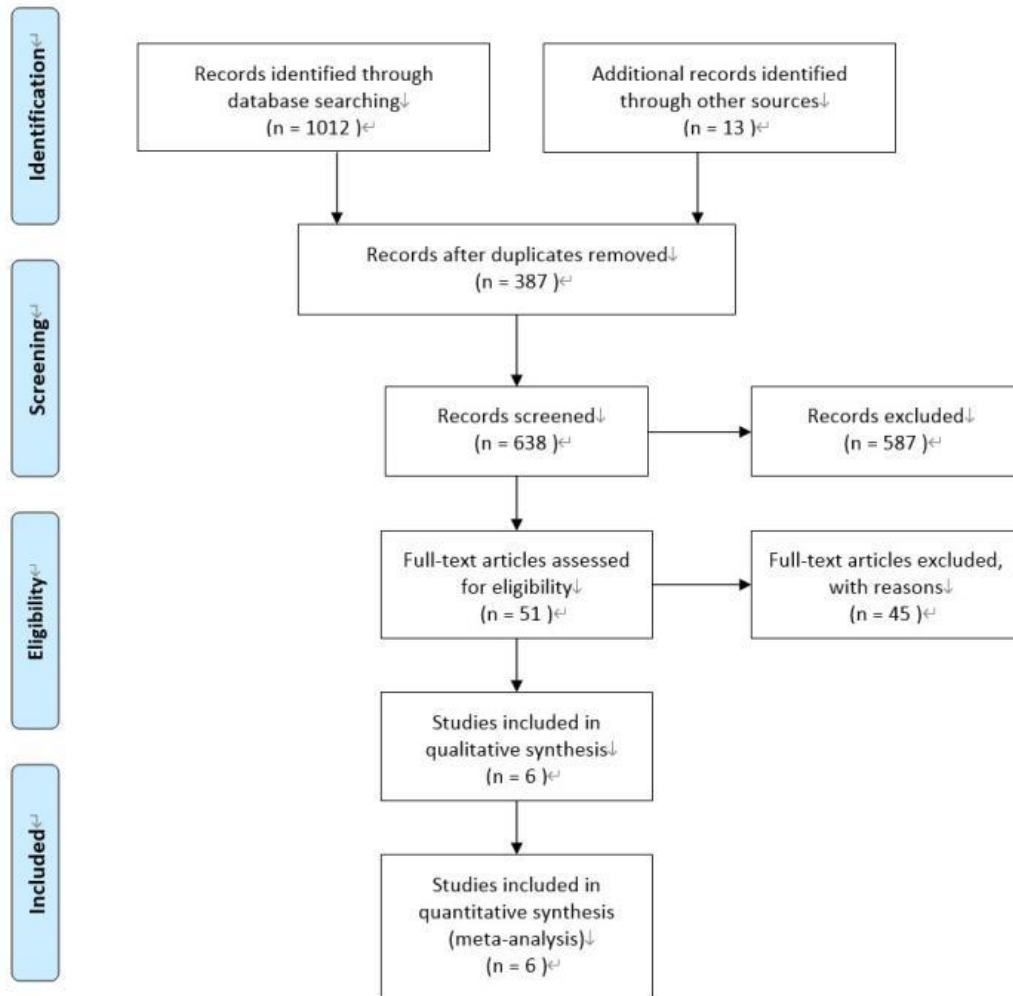


Fig.1 Flowchart of the search of literatures.

### 3.2 Characteristics of included studies

These 6 trials included a total of 820523 participants. Of these patients, 20611 patients received primary THAs with modular neck stems, and the other 799912 patients received primary THAs with nonmodular neck stems. The baseline characteristics of included trials were summarized in Table 1. The mean follow-up was 48.8 months. The majority of the enrolled participants indicated osteoarthritis as the primary indication for modular THA. Titanium- titanium (Ti-Ti) modular neck stems were used in three studies [13, 21, 22]. Cobalt-chrome (Co-Cr) modular neck stems were used in one studies [23]. Comparison between the groups for complications was recorded in Table 2.

Table 2 Complications for modular neck stem and nonmodular neck stem

Study	implant	Number of hips	Dislocation (%)	Fracture(%)	Loosening (%)	Infection (%)	All-cause survivorship (%)
AOANJRR	Modular	10286	167(1.6%)	143(1.4%)	200(1.9%)	90(0.9%)	822(8%)
	Nonmodular	410855	3162(0.8%)	3304(0.8%)	3758(0.9%)	2948(0.7%)	15547(3.8%)
Colas	Modular	8931	86(1%)	45(0.5%)	300(3.4%)	37(0.4%)	442(4.9%)

	Nonmodular	315177	2644(0.8%)	1050(0.3%)	7817(2.4%)	1345(0.4%)	11968(3.7%)
Duwelius	Modular	594	5(0.8%)	8(1.3%)	0	6(1%)	7(1.1%)
	Nonmodular	284	5(1.8%)	4(1.4%)	0	4(1.4%)	3(1%)
Fitch	Modular	692	9(1.3%)	7(1.1%)	10(1.4%)	1(0.1%)	27(3.9%)
	Nonmodular	73469	NA	27(0.94%)	NA	NA	2866
Gerhardt	Modular	95	4(4%)	0	0	0	2(2%)
	Nonmodular	95	4(4%)	0	0	0	2(2%)
Vendittoli	Modular	13	0	0	0	0	6(46%)
	Nonmodular	32	0	1(3%)	1(3%)	1(3%)	9(28%)

NA: Not applicable

### 3.3 Quality assessment, publication bias and sensitivity analysis

The methodological quality of the included studies was evaluated in terms of the Methodological Index for Non-Randomised Studies (MINORS). For all included studies, results of methodological quality assessment based on MINORS were summarized in Table 1. The average MINORS score for included studies was 18.7/24 (range, 15–20). All six studies had a retrospective study design.

Funnel plot was used to evaluate the publication bias of operative time, which displaced that all studies were within 95% CIs, leaving none outside the edge. Approximately symmetry was also showed in the funnel plot which indicated minimal publication bias (Fig 2). The sensitivity analysis was consistent by eliminating separate study in a random sequence and indicated no significant impact on the results.

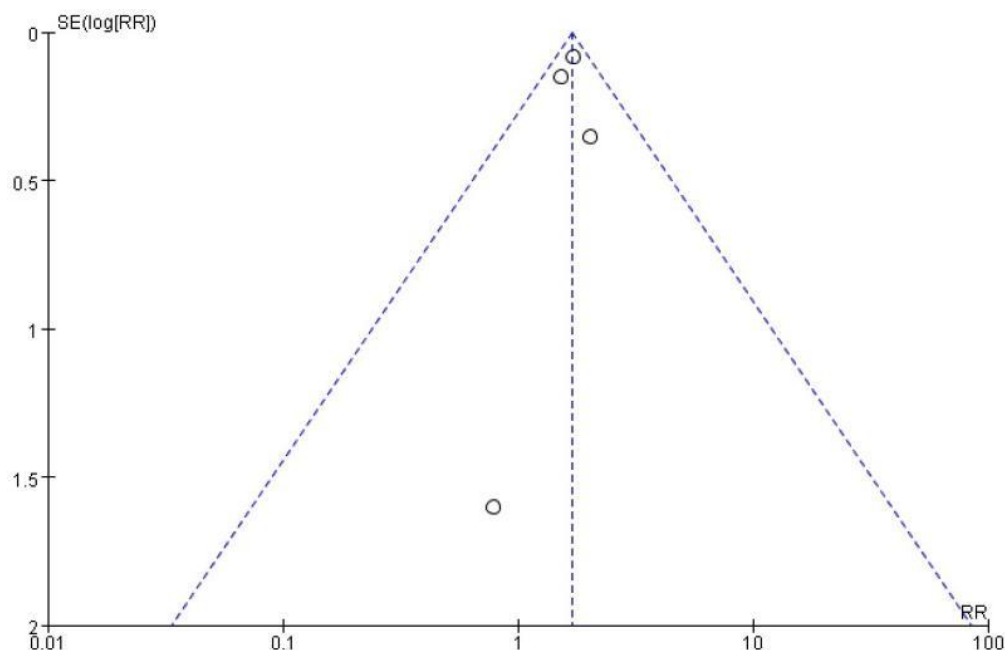


Fig.2 Funnel plot.

### 3.4 Revision rate

Data on revisions of THA with modular neck stems and with nonmodular neck stems were pooled in meta-analysis. All 6 studies with 820333 patients recorded revision details. The revision rate in the modular neck group (1306/20611, 6.3%) was higher than in the nonmodular neck group (30395/799912, 3.8%). However, the pooled analysis indicated that there was no significant difference between two groups (RR, 1.43; 95% CI, 0.99 to 2.04;  $P < 0.00001$ ) (Fig 3).

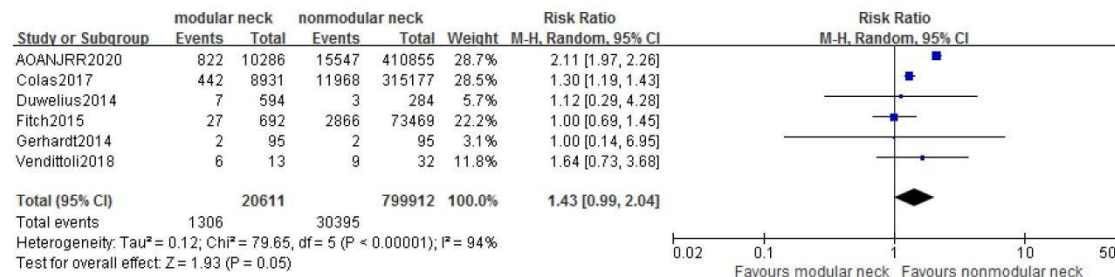


Fig.3 Forest plot for revision rate between modular neck stem group and nonmodular neck stem group.

### 3.5 Dislocation rate

Comparison between the groups for dislocation rate was recorded in Table 2. After acquiring data from 4 studies, we found that 259 of 19906 (1.3%) patients in the modular neck group and 5812 of 726411 (0.8%) patients in the nonmodular neck group suffered from dislocations. The forest plot indicated that there was no significant difference between two groups (RR, 1.38; 95% CI, 0.3 to 2.36;  $P < 0.0001$ ) (Fig4).

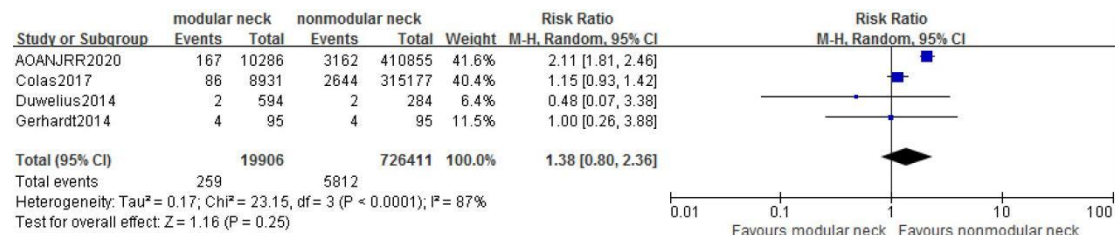


Fig.4 Forest plot for dislocation rate between modular neck stem group and nonmodular neck stem group.

### 3.6 Infection rate

Meta-analysis of 4 trials with 4431 patients revealed that infection rate in the modular neck group (133/19824, 0.67%) was greater than that in the nonmodular neck group (4298/726348, 0.59%). However, no significant differences were found between two groups (RR, 1.12; 95% CI, 0.94 to 1.34;  $P = 0.59$ ) (Fig 5). This result showed perfect homogeneity, with an  $I^2$  of 0%.

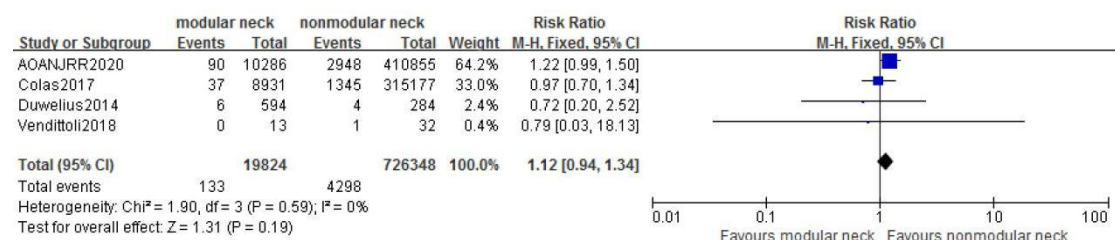


Fig.5 Forest plot for infection rate between modular neck stem group and nonmodular neck stem group.

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