Evaluation of spontaneous healing of perianal fistulae. A retrospective analysis.

Patricia Valdivieso Maldonado, Antoni Zawadzki, Louis Johnson
Pelvic Floor Centre, Department of Surgery, Skåne University Hospital Malmö, Lund University

Conclusion
At 2 years after diagnosis of fistula in ano, only 3% of fistulae had healed spontaneously. Clinical verification of healed state was only 1%. Surgical management of fistulae-in-ano seems to be still the treatment of choice.

Aim
To evaluate spontaneous healing of perianal fistulae without fistulasurgical intervention.

Method
Review of 374 patients with anal fistula referred to the Pelvic Floor Centre, Malmö, between 2013 – 2014 without any prior fistulasurgical intervention.

After excluding patients with earlier or ongoing drainage of fistulae, fistula surgery and inflammatory bowel disease, 175 patients were left for analysis. Earlier incisions of perianal abscesses without any attempt to explore the anal canal for the presence of anal fistula were accepted for inclusion.

Hospital records including available surgery and 3 D endo-anal ultrasound recordings were examined up to the end of December 2016.

Results
5 out of 175 patients were classified as having spontaneous healing of perianal fistulae. However only 2 out of the group was verified at surgery including 3 D endo-anal ultrasound. The remaining 3 patients declined surgery as they had no symptoms and thus no clinical evaluation of state of healed fistulae.

Median length of time from debut of symptoms to surgery was 13 months (1-360 months).