

1 **Thermal Damage Done to Bone by Burring and Sawing With and Without Irrigation in**
2 **Knee Arthroplasty**

3 **ABSTRACT**

4 Background: Heat from bone resecting tools used in knee surgery can induce thermal
5 osteonecrosis; potentially causing aseptic implant loosening. This study compared oscillating
6 saws to burrs in terms of temperature generation and histological damage. Use of irrigation
7 to reduce bone temperature was also investigated.

8 Methods: Temperatures were recorded during sawing and burring with/without irrigation
9 (uncooled/cooled). Histological analyses were then carried out. Differences between groups
10 were tested statistically ($\alpha = 0.05$).

11 Results: On average, burring produced higher temperatures than sawing ($p < 0.001$). When
12 uncooled irrigation was used, bone temperatures were significantly lower in sawed bone
13 than in burred bone ($p < 0.001$). Irrigation lowered temperatures and thermal damage
14 depths, and increased osteocyte viability ($p < 0.001$).

15 Conclusion: These results suggest that irrigating bone during resection could prevent
16 osteonecrosis onset.

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18 *Keywords: osteonecrosis; bone buring; bone sawing; knee arthroplasty; bone overheating;*
19 *irrigation*

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32 **INTRODUCTION**

33 Total knee arthroplasty (TKA) operations are becoming increasingly common in developed
34 countries due to an ageing population and a rise in obesity prevalence [1-5]. Reducing the
35 chances of, or preventing the need for surgical re-intervention are therefore essential to
36 ensure that healthcare systems maintain the ability to cope with annual increases without
37 negatively impacting on the quality of care offered [6,7].

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39 Heat from high powered orthopaedic tools can irreversibly damage or kill bone cells – a
40 process known as osteonecrosis [8-10,11]. Presently, it is agreed that bones exposed to
41 temperatures of $>47^{\circ}\text{C}$ for 60 seconds or longer are at risk of osteonecrosis [9-13]. This
42 leaves the implant exposed to necrotic tissue, reducing bone-implant incorporation, as well
43 as healing processes [9,12].

44 Although thermal osteonecrosis has been well described in current literature most studies
45 are drill based [15-19] as drills are the most commonly used tool in dentistry; a field where
46 thermal osteonecrosis is a prominent problem [19]. Few studies have investigated the effects
47 of sawing and burring in arthroplasty on bone health.

48 Robotic computer assisted surgical devices favour the use of a burr over a saw blade for
49 bone resection, as burrs provide more accurate bone preparation than saws. As these
50 devices are newly developed, little research has been carried out into the effects of burring
51 on bone.

52 The amount of heat generated by a tool has been found to be positively correlated with the
53 extent of thermal damage done to bone [11]. However, most studies which have investigated
54 thermal damage done to bone do not agree on the maximum temperatures generated by
55 sawing and burring [18-22].

56 Another common controversy in the literature is the use of irrigation in orthopaedic surgery.
57 Based on previous studies it is not clear whether using a cooling agent on the cutting surface
58 can reduce the temperature enough to lessen the thermal damage done to bone [12, 25-28].

59 To increase our understanding of the relationship between high powered orthopaedic tools
60 and heat-induced osteonecrosis, we aimed to (1) compare the thermal damage done to
61 bone by sawing and burring, (2) determine whether there were temperature differences
62 between sawing and burring bone, and (3) investigate the effect on temperature of irrigation
63 whilst cutting the bone.

64 **Materials and Methods**

65 *Bone Preparation and Resection*

66 Bovine femora (n=17) were sourced from an abattoir on the day of animal sacrifice, and
67 immediately prepared for resection. The diaphysis of each bone was fixed in a vice, with the
68 anterior side of the femur orientated superiorly, exposing the medial and lateral condyles for
69 cutting. The anterior and posterior facets of each condyle were cut, allowing temperatures
70 from both sites to be recorded during resection.

71 Bones were burred with a NavioPFS™ handheld robotic device (Blue Belt Technologies
72 Inc.), which was connected to an Anspach console. Identical spherical burrs of 6mm
73 diameter were used throughout the duration of this study [23, 28]. Burrs were renewed after
74 10 uses [23]. Tools with higher rotational cutting speeds generate less heat in bone than the
75 same tools at lower speeds [16,21,29-31]. Based on this information, and on advice given by
76 an orthopaedic surgeon who uses the device, burring speed was controlled with a foot pedal
77 at 80,000rpm; the maximum burring speed. Jaramaz & Nikou [32] found that it took
78 surgeons approximately 4 minutes to burr a femoral condyle facet for implant placement;
79 hence, burring time was controlled at 4 minutes.

80 An oscillating saw designed by Stryker Corporation sawed the bones in this study. Stryker
81 Performance Series™ sagittal blades were used (cut edge: 25.0mm, cut depth: 90.0mm,
82 thickness: 0.97mm). Blades were renewed after 10 uses [23]. The anterior facet of the
83 condyles were cut in the coronal plane, and bone from the posterior facet was resected in
84 the transverse plane. Bone sawing was done in 2 minute sessions. This was intentionally
85 shorter than burring, as the cutting process itself is faster. This time included the time it took
86 to realign the saw between cuts.

87 All cutting procedures were performed by a single author, after training from a consultant
88 orthopaedic surgeon. To best replicate the operative scenario, both anterior and posterior
89 facets of each condyle were cut. This allowed temperatures generated from two sites per
90 condyle to be recorded. The same surface area of bone was cut by both tools. Furthermore,
91 the same cutting style was always used on the same condyle (e.g. sawing on anterior and
92 posterior facets of medial condyle, and burring on anterior and posterior facets of lateral
93 condyle). The condyles which were burred and sawed were alternated per specimen, to
94 ensure that results were recorded from both lateral and medial condyles by both tools.

95 It should also be noted that during training, the appropriate software was used to map the
96 surfaces of specimens. This provided the user with surgical plans, thus the areas of bone
97 removed were equivalent to those adequate for implantation. During the testing, the user
98 aimed to burr and saw a similar area of bone to that which was removed during training
99 sessions.

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102 *Temperature Capture*

103 Temperatures were recorded with a visual infrared (IR) thermometer (Fluke® VT04 Model,
104 measurement accuracy $\pm 2^{\circ}\text{C}$ or $\pm 2\%$). In order to ensure both cutting styles were
105 comparable, temperatures were recorded every 5 seconds when sawing, and every 10
106 seconds when burring. Hence, 24 temperature readings were captured with each resection.
107 Temperatures of samples at 0 seconds were also recorded to allow temperature elevations
108 when cutting to be determined. A volunteer operated the camera as the author resected
109 bone samples.

110 *Irrigation*

111 Plastic tubing and a hollow metal wire conveyed the cooling agent from a bag to the cutting
112 site. 0.9% saline solution bags were prepared using sodium chloride and water. Flow rate
113 was controlled by the Anspach console when burring and sawing. Six of the sawed and
114 burred femora were not irrigated during cutting, another 6 were irrigated with room
115 temperature saline, and the remaining 5 were irrigated with cooled saline (4°C).

116 *Histomorphometric Analyses*

117 On completion of bone sawing and burring, approximately 1cm^3 samples were removed from
118 the cut surfaces and immersed in tissue fixative. All samples were processed and sectioned
119 perpendicularly to the cut made by the orthopaedic tools. Control samples were also
120 prepared. Following this, H&E standard staining protocol was used to stain the sectioned
121 samples. Images of control, burred and sawed tissue were taken with a microscope.

122 Twenty fields from histological sections of control, sawed and burred bone were randomly
123 chosen, and the percentages of viable cells relative to lacunae were calculated for each
124 field. Lacunae which had distinguishable osteocytes within them were characterised as living
125 (viable) cells, whereas empty lacunae were classified as dead (non-viable) cells.
126 Additionally, the distance between the burred or sawed surface and first visible osteocyte
127 was calculated for all images.

128 *Statistical Analyses*

129 Two-way ANOVA tests were carried out to test differences between groups. Non parametric
130 tests were carried out where appropriate. For the purposes of this study, the level of
131 significance was set at $\alpha=0.05$ (ver. 16, Minitab Inc., State College, PA, USA).

132 **Results**

133 *Temperature Generation*

134 As the bovine femora were not at body temperature on arrival to the laboratory, temperature
135 elevations from the initial readings were calculated for all measurements in each data set.
136 Initial bone temperature was subtracted from each measurement. Average body temperature
137 (37.00°C) was added to these values. These adjusted values were used to analyse the
138 results as they are easier to interpret.

139 Mean temperature at the surface of the bone increased suddenly on initiation of burring and
140 sawing (Fig. 1). Following this, it increased at a slower rate towards a point where an
141 apparent peak occurred. It took longer for irrigated bones to reach mean temperatures of at
142 least 47°C, with non-irrigated burred and sawed bones taking as little as 20 seconds to
143 reach 47°C. Critically, mean temperatures remained beyond 47°C for >60 seconds in non-
144 irrigated bone as well as in bone burred with room temperature irrigation (Fig. 1). With the
145 use of cooled irrigation, a mean temperature of >47°C was not reached, regardless of the
146 cutting tool used (Fig. 1).

147 On average, the mean temperature in burred bone was higher than sawed bone (table 1).
148 Examples of the temperatures reached during burring and sawing can be seen in figure 2. A
149 two-way ANOVA with cutting modality and irrigation modality as factors identified that both
150 factors significantly affected bone temperature (both $p < 0.001$).

151 Bonferroni-adjusted post-hoc tests identified that, on average, burring bone resulted in
152 temperature 1.2 degrees higher than sawing ($p < 0.001$), whilst the absence of irrigation led
153 to a mean bone temperature 3.5 degrees higher than in bone irrigated by room temperature
154 irrigation ($p < 0.001$) which, in turn, was 2.2 degrees greater than cooled irrigation ($p <$
155 0.001). The significant interaction effect between these factors warranted further
156 examination. Without irrigation, burring and sawing created the same temperature
157 (independent t-test, $p = 0.821$); likewise when cooled irrigation was used ($p = 0.08$).
158 However, when room temperature irrigation was used, bone temperature was reduced by 3
159 degrees more during sawing than during burring ($p < 0.001$).

160 *Extent of Thermal Damage Done*

161 It is generally accepted that exposing bone to temperatures of >47°C for a period of 60
162 seconds or longer increases the risk of osteonecrosis [13-14]. Figure 1 showed that the
163 mean temperature was likely to remain >47°C for greater than 60 seconds if the bone was
164 resected without irrigation, or if it was burred with room temperature saline.

165 Further analysis was carried out to investigate the relationship between tool type and length
166 of exposure of bone to temperatures of 47°C or greater. Six consecutive values of >47°C in
167 burred bone suggested that the tissue was in danger of osteonecrosis, whereas 12
168 consecutive values of >47°C suggested risk of osteonecrosis in sawed bone (due to the
169 different sampling rates used).

170 Our results showed that burred bone was at high risk of developing osteonecrosis, even
171 when irrigation at room temperature was used (table 2). Despite the fact that mean
172 temperature was lowered with the use of irrigation when burring (figure 1, table 1), the
173 likelihood of temperatures to exceed 47°C for >60s remained unchanged. This likelihood
174 was greatly reduced by the use of cooled irrigation. However, 20% of samples still reached
175 47°C and remained at or above this threshold for >60s, despite the fact that the irrigation
176 had provided some cooling effect (figure 1, tables 1&2). Conversely, irrigation at room
177 temperature was effective at reducing the likelihood of osteonecrosis arising in sawed bone.
178 In fact, on no occasion did the temperature exceed 47°C for >60 seconds when sawing with
179 irrigation.

180

181 *Histomorphometric Analyses*

182 Images of control samples, and bone samples which had been burred or sawed are seen in
183 figures 3 and 4. Bone samples which had been cut by both tools showed increased numbers
184 of dead cells compared to the control specimens ($p < 0.001$; two-way ANOVA).

185 Removing the control group, a subsequent two-way ANOVA investigating the effect of
186 irrigation and cutting modality on the percentage of dead cells suggests that cutting modality
187 has no effect on this variable ($p = 0.311$) but irrigation does ($p = 0.001$). There was no
188 interaction effect. Bonferroni-adjusted comparisons identified that no irrigation and room
189 temperature irrigation were not significantly different in their percentage dead cells (41.3% vs
190 45.3% respectively), whilst there were significantly less dead cells in bone irrigated by
191 cooled saline (32.9%, $p = 0.035$ and $p = 0.001$ against no irrigation and room irrigation
192 respectively). The mean percentages of non-viable osteocytes are shown in figure 5.

193 The distances between the burred surfaces and first visible viable osteocyte were calculated
194 for all fields (i.e. minimum thermal damage depth). A 2-way ANOVA was used to analyse
195 damage depth. The depth did not vary with cutting mode. However, cool irrigation damage
196 depth (13.7 μm) was 12.9 μm less compared to no irrigation (26.6 μm , $p = 0.002$) and 16.0
197 μm less compared to room temperature irrigation (29.7 μm , $p < 0.001$).

198 **Discussion**

199 *Temperature*

200 According to Fig. 1, there was a particular trend to the temperatures generated with time.
201 The initial increase in temperature was expected, as bone has been found to retain heat
202 caused by frictional forces generated by orthopaedic cutting tools [22]. The following
203 decrease in temperature has also been previously reported by Shin & Yoon [21] when
204 burring, and by Dolan *et al.* [31] when sawing bone. This may be explained by a theory
205 proposed by Gehrke and colleagues [13] which states that cortical bone is more likely to
206 overheat than trabecular bone due to its higher thermal conductivity value. Therefore,
207 temperatures are likely to be higher in cortical bone. This theory also describes a
208 temperature decrease as cut depth is increased in trabecular bone, which was also
209 observed in this study. Peak temperatures may correspond to the time at which the border
210 between both bone types was reached by the cutting tools [21, 32-34].

211 Results from our study also agreed with the majority of studies to date who have reported
212 that tools used to resect bone without irrigation generate temperatures of up to 100°C [20-
213 21, 24, 35-36].

214 To be able to cut the facets of the femoral condyles properly when burring, the burr needed
215 to remain in contact with the tissue for the majority of each 4 minute session [32]. Hence, it
216 was unsurprising that on average, burring led to higher temperatures in bone.

217 When the effect of irrigation was taken into consideration however, only bones which had
218 been sawed and burred with room temperature irrigant showed significant differences. It is
219 possible that these results were observed due to the nature of the irrigation methods. When
220 sawing, the cooling agent was applied directly to the bone by the volunteer. When burring
221 however, the tubing which conveyed the saline solution to the cutting site was attached to
222 the drill. The cooling agent therefore made contact with the hot burr before being applied to
223 the tissue. In addition to this, the drill itself quickly became very hot as the device was used –
224 potentially heating the saline as it was conducted from the bag to the cutting site.
225 Unfortunately, the same irrigation methods could not be implemented, as unlike the burring
226 tool, the saw did not have a channel through which the irrigant could be delivered to the
227 operative site.

228 According to our results, uncooled irrigation was effective at reducing the mean temperature
229 of sawed bone to <47°C ($p < 0.05$). Baker *et al.* [38] reported that sawing bone with room
230 temperature irrigation reduced the temperature at the cut surface by a mean of 4°C. This
231 agrees with results found in our study.

232 Matthews & Hirsch [39] reported that temperatures of bone drilled with a cooling agent were
233 between 40 and 50°C. Our results from burred bone agreed with this. In our study, cooled
234 irrigation was required to reduce the mean temperatures of bone <47°C. This cooling agent
235 was also needed to reduce exposure of the tissue to temperatures of >47°C for >60 seconds
236 when burring. Similar studies have not burred bone for a long enough period to be able to
237 fairly compare results, therefore further investigation is merited here [15, 21, 40].

238 Overall, our results suggest that sawing with any irrigation reduced the risk of osteonecrosis;
239 but when burring, irrigation at room temperature had little effect. Hence, cooled irrigant
240 should be used to reduce the risk of irreversible cell death when burring bone.

241 *Histomorphometry*

242 James *et al.*, and Karaca *et al.* [23-24] stated that histomorphometric analyses can quantify
243 the amount of thermal damage done to bone by staining the tissue with haematoxylin and
244 eosin (H&E). According to their study, heat damage decreases affinity for extracellular
245 protein collagen, reducing the eosin stain and increasing haematoxylin staining. Hence, by
246 seeing where the colour of the tissue changes, an estimation of tissue damage depth could
247 be made. In addition to this, areas of bone tissue which have been irreversibly damaged by
248 heat lack osteocytes within their lacunae. This makes it possible to examine osteocyte
249 density within the sample as a measure of bone damage, as well as estimate depth of
250 thermal damage by staining.

251 In our study, the same percentages of cells were non-viable in non-irrigated sawed and
252 burred bone. This could be explained by the fact that these bones were exposed to similar
253 temperatures throughout the cutting processes.

254 It was found that mean percentages of non-viable cells were greatest in bone which had
255 been cut with irrigation at room temperature ($p < 0.001$), despite the fact that the
256 temperatures of the cut surfaces were higher in non-irrigated bone. One possible reason for
257 this is that these irrigated bone samples were exposed to toxic solutions during the
258 processing stages for a longer period of time than the other bone samples. Another is that
259 that the saline may have negatively impacted on the cell viability to a certain degree.
260 Moreover, bone samples from the femora were not removed immediately after the animal
261 was sacrificed. Although it was known that the animals had been sacrificed on the same day,
262 the length of time between sample removal and death of animal was unknown.

263 Dull surgical tools have been found to increase the amount of heat generated at an
264 operative site [42]. By reusing the blades and burrs, it is possible that the temperatures
265 observed in this study were higher than normal. Consequently, cell-viability may have been

266 affected. This gives another potential explanation for the unexpectedly higher percentage of
267 non-viable cells in bone irrigated with room temperature saline.

268 In this study, the mean minimum depth of thermal damage decreased with the use of
269 irrigation ($p < 0.001$). Considering the effect irrigation had on temperature, this was not
270 unexpected.

271 One previous study has also investigated the depth of thermal damage by looking at
272 histological sections; however, the depth of thermal damage was measured as the distance
273 from the cut surface to the deepest empty osteocyte lacuna in the field of view i.e. the
274 estimated maximum thermal damage depth [23]. In this study we measured minimum
275 thermal damage depth. This was believed to be a more reliable way of calculating thermal
276 damage depth, as it is not possible to confirm that the lack of osteocytes throughout the
277 tissue was caused by exposure to high temperatures. As the methods used in both cases
278 were different, our results could not be fairly compared to those discussed by James *et al.*
279 [23]. It can be estimated however, that if our study had used the same methods as James *et*
280 *al.* [23], the potential depth of thermal damage in our study would have been greater.

281 Further research is required to investigate the effect of heat on thermal damage depth, as
282 current results vary widely. One study found that necrotic zones of up to 1.9mm could be
283 caused by high temperatures in bone where no irrigation had been used [21]. Conversely, an
284 older study by Lundskog [13] believed that exposure to temperatures of at least 50°C
285 caused injury for up to 1mm.

286 *Limitations*

287 Further limitations to this study included the fact that all specimens had a thick and even
288 cartilaginous layer – synonymous of good quality cartilage, suggesting that the quality of the
289 bone underlying this cartilage was also good. This is unlike the bone of subjects undergoing
290 TKA. Osteoarthritic subchondral bone is likely to be sclerotic, potentially increasing
291 temperature observed during bone removal. Furthermore, there are variables which come
292 into consideration when cutting bone in theatre which could not be mimicked in the
293 laboratory such as blood circulation and soft tissue presence. Collectively, these variables
294 could have affected the amount of temperature generated when cutting bone.

295 **Conclusions**

296 The results from this study showed that without irrigation, sawing and burring bone
297 generated temperatures which were high enough to cause irreversible histological changes
298 to bone, including cell death. Although the risk of developing osteonecrosis was high in non-

299 irrigated bone, the temperatures were low enough to be reduced by applying a cooling agent
300 to the cut surface.

301 These results imply that irrigating the bone in orthopaedic procedures such as TKA is a
302 feasible approach to reduce the temperature at the cutting site, and thus decrease the risk of
303 heat induced osteonecrosis. This could be most applicable for procedures which replace the
304 diseased joint with cementless implants, where the only source of heat comes from the tools
305 used, and no cement is available to bridge any gap between the implant and healthy bone.

306 Overall, based on these results it is advised that cooled saline should be used in orthopaedic
307 procedures such as TKA when burring and sawing bone, to reduce the chances of
308 irreversibly thermally damaging the bone. If irrigation is unavailable, intermittent bone cutting
309 is suggested, to prevent onset of osteonecrosis.

310 **References**

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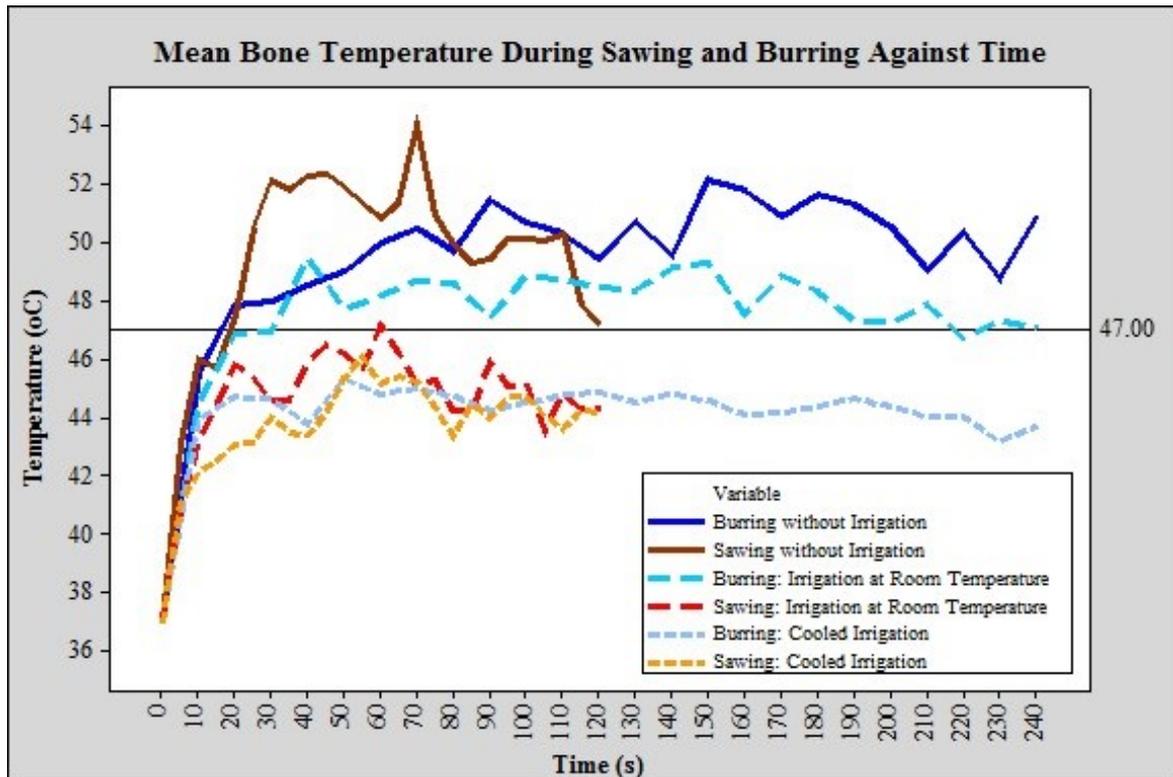
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455 **Fig. 1:** Mean temperature measurements recorded every 10 seconds when burring and
456 every 5 seconds when sawing with and without irrigation.

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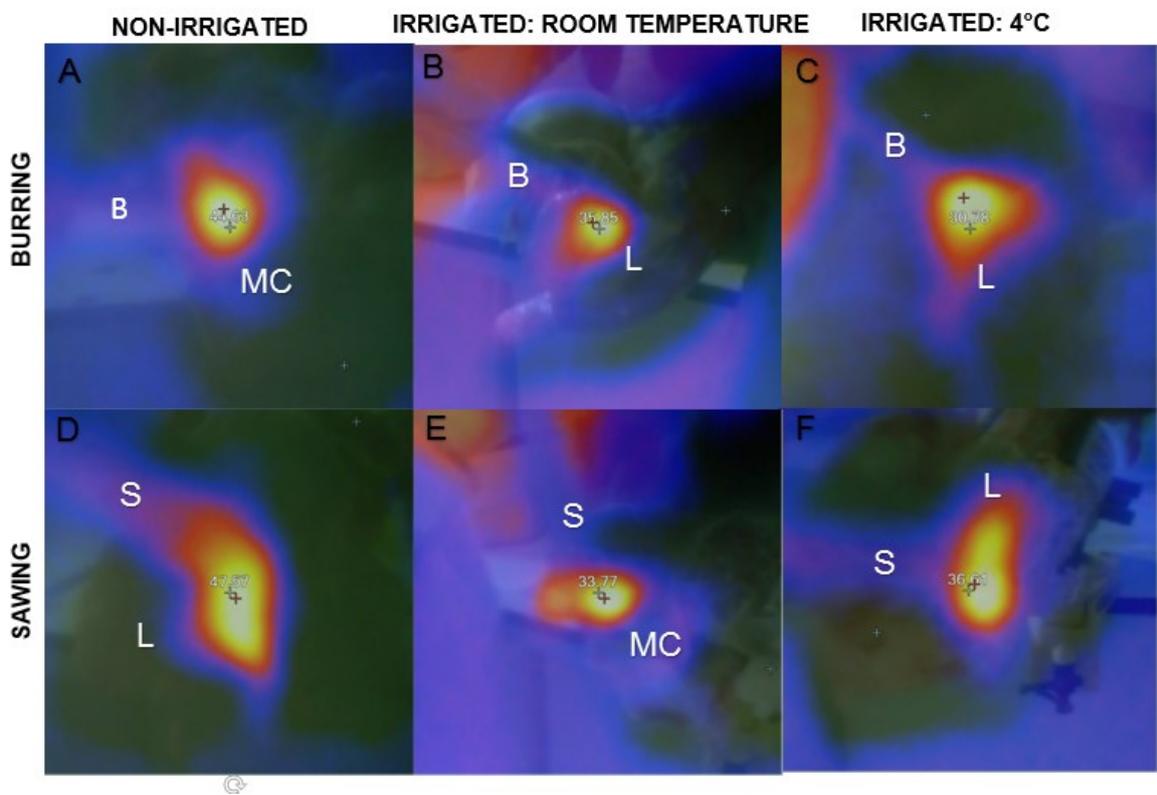
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Table 1: Mean temperatures of the bones when burring and sawing.

Condition	Mean Temperature (range) of Burred Bone (°C)	Mean Temperature (range) of Sawed Bone (°C)
Non-Irrigated	49.98±0.32 (41-59)	49.87±0.34 (41-55)
Irrigation: Room Temperature	47.93±0.34 (37-55)	44.96±0.22 (39-49)
Irrigation: 4°C	44.44±0.18 (41-49)	44.02±0.15 (41-47)

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Fig. 2. (A) Non-irrigated burred bone; (B) Burred bone cooled with room temperature irrigation (C) Burred bone cooled with 4°C irrigation; (D) Non-irrigated sawed bone; (E) Sawed bone cooled with room temperature irrigation; and (F) Sawed bone cooled with 4°C irrigation. Crosses correspond to 'Maximum Temperature' (red) and 'Centre-point Recorded Temperature' (white) (**B** – Burr, **LC** – Lateral Condyle, **MC** – Medial Condyle, **S** – Saw blade)

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Table 2: The percentage of burred and sawed condyle facets which would have reached temperatures of >47°C for a period of 60 seconds or longer if initial bone temperature was 37°C.

Cutting Condition	Burred Bone	Sawed Bone
Non-Irrigated	83.3%	58.3%
Irrigation at Room Temperature	83.3%	0.0%
Irrigation at 4°C	20.0%	0.0%

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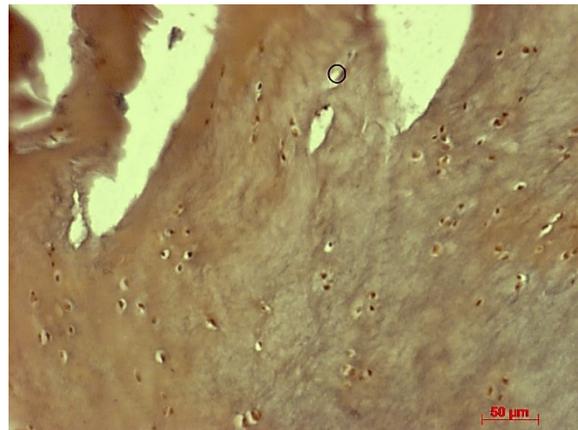
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Fig 3: Example of a control specimen which had not been cut by the burr or saw prior to analysis. Black ring highlights empty osteocyte lacuna. The tissue was H&E stained. Image at x20 magnification.

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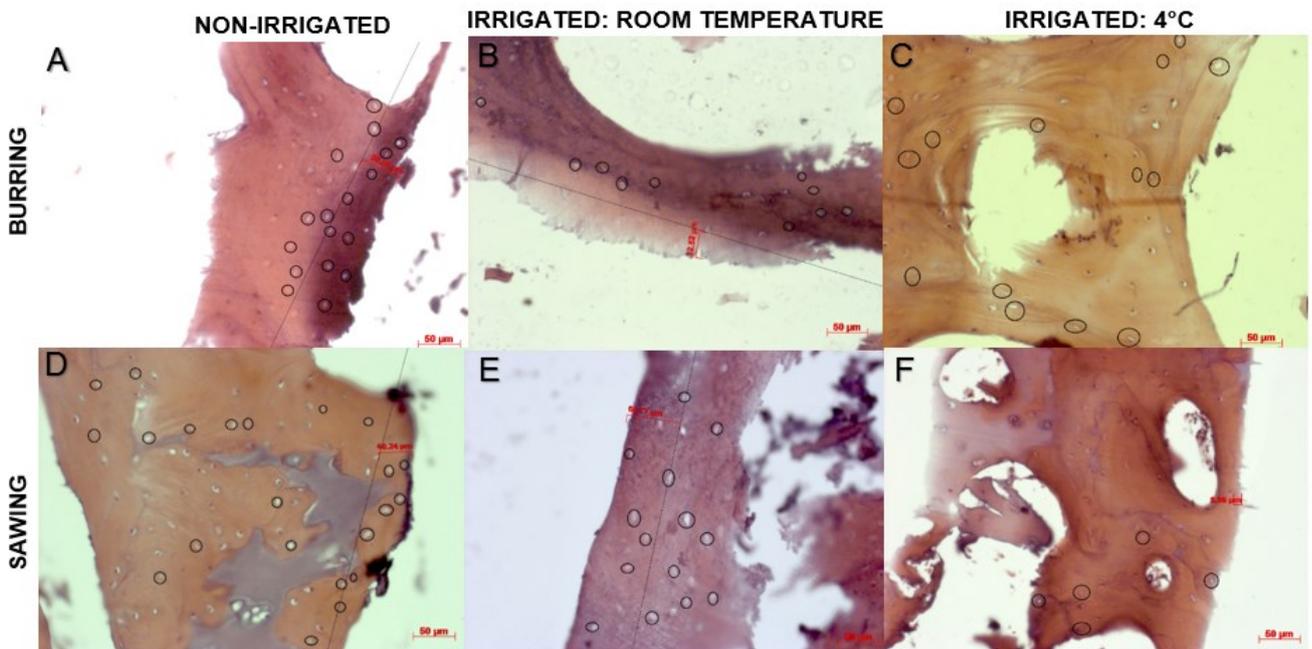
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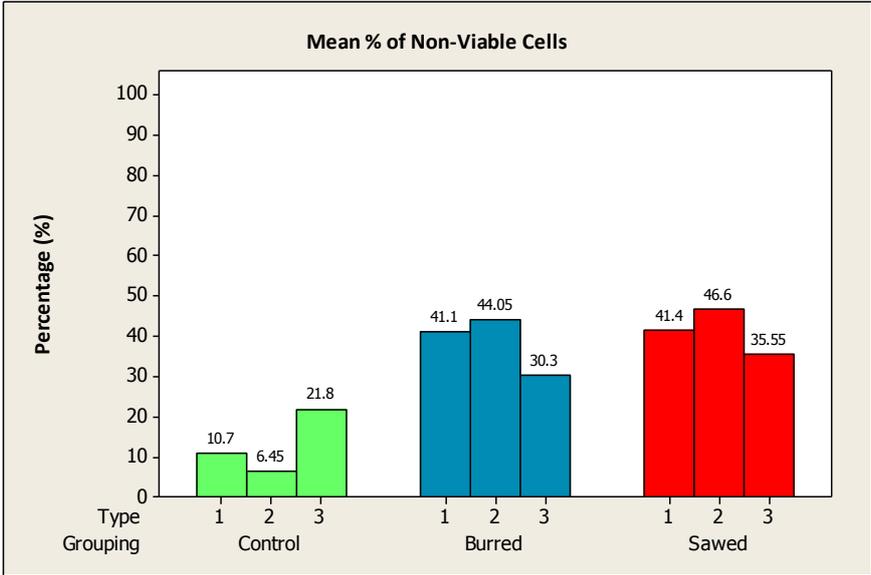
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Fig. 4. Histological images of non-irrigated and irrigated bone at 6µm taken by a light microscope. (A) Non-irrigated burred bone; (B) Burred bone cooled with room temperature irrigation (C) Burred bone cooled with 4°C irrigation; (D) Non-irrigated sawed bone; (E) Sawed bone cooled with room temperature irrigation; and (F) Sawed bone cooled with 4°C irrigation. *Black rings highlight empty osteocyte lacunae (H&E stained; x20 magnification). Lines correspond to estimated tissue damage depth.*

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637 **Fig. 5:** Bar charts showing the mean percentages of empty osteocyte lacunae present within
638 one field of view in control, burred, and sawed bone which were not irrigated (Type 1),
639 irrigated with saline at room temperature (Type 2), and irrigated with saline at 4°C (Type 3)
640 (n=20).

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