Editorial

Early Treatment of Shoulder Pathology Is Necessary but Not Enough Is Being Performed

Abstract: Delayed treatment of shoulder instability results in bone loss requiring more-complicated surgery, in turn resulting in less-optimal outcomes. Similarly, delayed treatment of repairable rotator cuff tears results in irreparable tears requiring more-complicated surgery and resulting in less-optimal outcomes. Delayed treatment of shoulder pathology is a problem. Solutions include education and research investigation.

There have been an enormous number of publications on shoulder instability with bone loss in the last few years.[1-104] With so much published, a series of textbooks could be filled. In addition, there have been a massive number of recent publications on irreparable rotator cuff tears.[105-270] Again, there is so much material one could fill an entire encyclopedia.

Yet, when it comes to shoulder instability, in cases of early surgical intervention bone loss can generally be minimized or avoided, resulting in superior patient outcomes and lower rates of complications.[50] What is more, this has been well understood for some time.[271]

Similarly, when it comes to rotator cuff tears, in cases of early surgical intervention, irreparable tears can generally be avoided, resulting in superior patient outcomes and lower rates of complications.[272-274] Again, this has been well understood for some time.[275,276]

What makes little sense is that, if early treatment of shoulder instability and rotator cuff tears results in better outcomes and delayed treatment results in shoulder instability with bone loss and irreparable rotator cuff tears, why is not enough early treatment being performed?

Delayed treatment of shoulder instability is a problem. A solution could be to educate our colleagues, patients, and the public. An additional solution could be for investigators to conduct original scientific research with a goal of determining the causes of this problem. By better understanding the cause, we may be better positioned to discover necessary solutions.

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