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Title

Outcomes of non-surgical treatment of triangular fibrocartilage complex injuries

Purpose

Non-surgical management of triangular fibrocartilage complex (TFCC) injury is heterogeneous and outcome of treatment is not reported in literature. Our hypothesis is that >50% of patients diagnosed with acute TFCC injury will improve with non-surgical treatment.

Methods

We reviewed a consecutive list of patients referred to our therapists for conservative treatment of acute TFCC injury during a one year period. These patients presented with ulnar sided wrist pain and were found to have fovea tenderness and DRUJ instability. Once diagnosed, they underwent a standard 14-week protocol. Through a case file review, we determined the number of patients who had completed the therapy, had resolution of symptoms, were still symptomatic, and proceeded with surgery. We also determined the reason they did not complete the program and whether they were still symptomatic at an average of one year after their diagnosis.

Results

There were 63 patients referred for acute TFCC injury therapy. Only 25/63 (39.7%) completed the 14-week protocol with 19/63 (30.2%) reporting resolution of symptoms. 4/63 (6.3%) were still symptomatic but did not report functional impairment. 2/63 (3.2%) underwent surgery despite completion of therapy. Of 38/63 (60.3%) who did not complete therapy, 13/63 (20.6%) had resolution of symptoms, 5/63 (7.9%) had improvement of symptoms, 1/63 (1.6%) sought second opinion, 5/63 (7.9%) went for surgery, and 14/63 (22.2%) were uncontactable.

Conclusion

Overall, 41/63 (65.1%) patients diagnosed with acute TFCC injury had improved or resolution of symptoms without surgery. We identified that resolution of wrist pain was the main reason many did not complete the program.