Surgery for rotator cuff disease is no more effective than active non-surgical treatment

PEARLS No. 75, June 2008, written by Brian R McAvoy

Clinical question: How effective is surgery for rotator cuff disease?

Bottom line: Comparing active non-surgical treatment (physiotherapy or exercise programmes) with surgery for rotator cuff disease showed no significant differences in outcomes such as pain, function and participant evaluation of success. There were also no significant differences in outcomes between arthroscopic and subacromial decompression, although four trials reported earlier recovery with arthroscopic decompression.

Caveat: There was insufficient evidence to suggest whether surgery made a difference to other outcomes, such as the ability to use the shoulder normally, quality of life, range of shoulder motion, strength, the likelihood of recurrence, time taken to return to work or sports, and patient satisfaction.

Context: Rotator cuff disease is the most common cause of shoulder pain seen by physicians. Shoulder pain is the third most common musculoskeletal reason for seeking medical care after back and neck pain,1 and accounts for 1.2 per cent of all general practice encounters in Australia.2


Further references

House dust mite control measures do not reduce asthma symptoms

PEARLS No. 80, August 2008, written by Brian R McAvoy

Clinical question: Are measures to control house dust mite antigens effective in mite-sensitive asthma patients?

Bottom line: Measures to control house dust mite antigens in the homes of mite-sensitive asthmatics had no effect on peak expiratory flow, asthma symptom scores or medication usage. The measures included acaricides, mattress covers, vacuum cleaning, ventilation, freezing, washing, air filtration, ionisers and combinations of these measures.

Caveat: Despite the fact many trials were of poor quality and would be expected to exaggerate the reported effect, the review did not find any effect from the interventions. Mite reduction was determined in different ways in the various studies.

Context: The major allergen in house dust comes from mites. Chemical, physical and combined methods of reducing mite allergen levels are intended to reduce asthma symptoms in people who are sensitive to house dust mites.

Cochrane Systematic Review: Gotzsche PC and Johansen HK. House dust mite control measures for asthma. Cochrane Reviews 2008, Issue 1. Article No. CD001187. DOI: 10.1002/14651858.CD001187.pub3. This review contains 54 trials involving 3002 participants.