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No benefit in delaying shoulder surgery

30 March, 2015 Alice Klein 0 comments



Patients with painful rotator cuff injuries do not need to wait months for their shoulder stiffness to "settle down" before surgery, according to orthopaedic researchers from the University of NSW.

In a world-first study, 25 patients with rotator cuff injuries and shoulder stiffness underwent a glenohumeral joint capsule release to relieve their shoulder stiffness at the time of surgery.

The patients were compared with 170 people who waited for their shoulder stiffness to subside naturally before undergoing rotator cuff surgery.

After surgery, both groups reported significant improvements in pain, range of motion and function.

However, the 25 patients who underwent glenohumeral joint capsule release at the time of surgery had no re-tears of the shoulder over the next two years, compared with 20% of patients in the surgery-only group.

UNSW Professor George Murrell, senior author of the study and director of the Orthopaedic Research Institute at St George Hospital, told *Australian Doctor* patients should undergo shoulder surgery as soon as possible after sustaining an injury.

"The earlier the better," he said. "If it's painful, it's a good time to do the repair."

He said glenohumeral joint capsule release involved arthroscopically manipulating a patient's shoulder under anaesthesia at the time of surgery.

The results of the study were presented to the **American Orthopaedic Society for Sports Medicine's** Specialty Day in Las Vegas on the weekend.

"We hope these findings make a positive impact and reduce the recovery period, particularly for the many older Australians who suffer rotator cuff injuries," Professor Murrell said.

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