Reviewer’s report

Title: A prospective, observational cohort study of patients presenting to an Emergency Department with acute shoulder trauma: The Manchester Emergency Shoulder (MeSH) project

Version: 0 Date: 2017-03-20

Reviewer: Robert J. Neviaser

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While I agree that there are a significant number of shoulder injuries that cannot be seen on routine x-ray, the sample size of 20 patients is too small to draw any conclusion. If this unit sees over 900 patients a year with shoulder injuries and 67% of those are soft tissue, it seems strange that they would select only 20, even prospectively, for inclusion.

Rotator cuff tears are seen in patients over the age of 50, with a few over the age of 40. In the current color, only 7 patients are over age 50, 5 are between 40 and 50, and 8 are under age 40. Their youngest patient is age 20 and was alleged to have a partial rotator cuff tear on MRA. I have treated over 10,000 patients with rotator cuff tears and have never seen a patient with even a partial tear at age 20. MRA tends to distort soft tissue findings and most shoulder surgeons on this side of the pond use MRI without contrast because it is less distorting and more accurate, despite what the Cochrane base states.

In the cases where the occult, undisplaced fracture of the greater tuberosity was seen on x-ray at 2 weeks, an MRI is unnecessary and expensive in this country where we do not have a national health service.

I do think that this project might produce some useful information if it changed focus. If limited to patients over age 50 and directed toward assessing the incidence of traumatic rotator cuff tears in a large number of patients, it would provide useful documentation of what that incidence is.

In the present form I do not feel that it helps define much except that soft tissue injuries do occur. That is not new.
Are the methods appropriate and well described?
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Does the work include the necessary controls?
If not, please specify which controls are required in your comments to the authors.

No

Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?
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