

THE TREATMENT OF ROTATOR CUFF TEAR: KEYS TO A SUCCESSFUL OUTCOME

1. Timely identification of the problem and definitive treatment
2. Early repair of traumatic tendon tears. Healing of the repair is more likely if the tear is repaired acutely
3. Specialty expertise and treatment translates into cost-effective treatment (see article below)

Costs analysis of successful rotator cuff repair surgery: an outcome study. Comparison of gatekeeper system in surgical patients.

Savoie FH, Field LD, Jenkins RN

Arthroscopy 1995; 11:672-6.

Abstract

In an effort to determine the cost effectiveness of rotator cuff repair surgery in workers' compensation patients, a financial analysis of 50 consecutive patients with a "successful" result was performed. Treatment costs were analyzed from the date of initial injury through all evaluations, diagnostic studies, surgical reconstruction, physical therapy and work hardening. Additionally, all workers' compensation payments and the cost of settlement was analyzed. The average cost of medical care was \$50,302.25 per patient. The average time to return to unrestricted duty from the date of injury was 11 months. However, patients referred to a specialist immediately following the diagnosis of a rotator cuff tear had total costs that averaged \$25,870.64 and returned to work an average of 7 months postoperatively. Patients managed via a "gatekeeper" system averaged \$100,280.10 in total costs and the average return to work was 18 months. These differences in cost and return to work were both statistically significant, $P < .05$. In conclusion, immediate referral of rotator cuff tears for specialized care results in decreased cost and earlier return to work.