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#### **JACO**

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### Journal of the Academy of Chiropractic Orthopedists September 2013 – Volume 10, Issue 3

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❖ Multnomah Falls, Oregon - courtesy of columbiariverimages.com. JACO 2013, 10(3): 1.

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- ❖ Bevelaqua, A. et al: Posterior Interosseous Neuropathy: Electrodiagnostic Evaluation. Reviewed by Priest, G. JACO 2013: 10(3): 9-12.
- ❖ Bronfort, G., et al: Spinal Manipulation, Medication, or Home Exercise with Advice for Acute and Subacute Neck Pain. Reviewed by Labrum, I. JACO 2013: 10(3): 14-19.

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## Multnomah Falls, Oregon



Courtesy of columbiariverimages.com

Multnomah Falls, Oregon - at 620 feet - is the second highest year-round waterfall in the United States, the first being Yosemite Falls in California. Nearly two-million visitors a year come to see Multnomah Falls, making it Oregon's number one tourist place. The falls is fed by underground springs from Larch Mountain. Benson Bridge, built in 1914, crosses Multnomah Creek between the Upper and Lower Multnomah Falls. Multnomah Falls is one of many falls in the Columbia River Gorge which can be seen from the Historic Columbia River Highway. Downstream from Multnomah Falls are Wahkeena Falls and Bridal Veil Falls. Crown Point and Rooster Rock, other popular Oregon Gorge locations, are further downstream. Upstream are Oneonta Gorge and Horsetail Falls. Multnomah Falls is located at Columbia River Mile.

At Multnomah Falls the visitor can view six lava flows in the cliff face, with pillow flows being visible in the upper sequence near the lip of the Upper Falls. Five more flows of Grande Ronde basalt can be seen along Multnomah Creek along the trail above the falls. The cliff of Multnomah Falls was enhanced by the flood waters of the Missoula Floods thousands of years ago when the flood waters eroded away softer material, highlighting the spectacular cliff face.



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#### MRI of the Elbow: Techniques and Spectrum of Disease

Ashvin K. Dewan, MD, A. Bobby Chhabra, MD, A. Jay Khanna, MD, MBA, Mark W. Anderson, MD, and Lance M. Brunton, MD

J Bone Joint Surg Am. 2013;95: e99(1-13)

JACO Editorial Reviewer: Cliff Tao, DC, DACBR

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#### **Authors' Abstract:**

**Background**: Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) of the elbow allows for high-resolution evaluation of osseous and soft tissue structures, including ligaments, tendons, nerves, and muscles. Multiple imaging techniques and pulse sequences exist. The purpose of this article is to update orthopedic surgeons on current MRI techniques and illustrate the spectrum of elbow pathology detectable by MRI.

**Methods**: We searched MEDLINE with use of the keywords "MRI" and "elbow" for studies less than five years old evaluating MRI techniques. These papers, our experience, and textbooks reviewing elbow MRI provided the information for this article.

Results: We discuss the essentials and applications of the following techniques: (1) conventional, non-gadolinium enhanced MRI; (2) gadolinium-enhanced MRI; and (3) magnetic resonance arthrography. The classic MRI appearances of occult fractures, loose bodies, ulnar collateral ligament injuries, lateral collateral ligament complex injuries, biceps tendon injuries, triceps tendon injuries, triceps tendon injuries, lateral epicondylitis, medial epicondylitis, septic arthritis, osteomyelitis, osteochondritis dissecans, compression neuropathies, synovial

disorders, and various soft-tissue masses are reviewed.

**Conclusions**: MRI is a valuable, noninvasive method of elbow evaluation. This article updates orthopedic surgeons on the various available MRI techniques and facilitates recognition of the MRI appearances of the most commonly seen pathologic elbow conditions.

#### Background

Various technical advances in MRI have improved detection of abnormalities of the elbow. A review of imaging techniques and sequences specific to the elbow are presented, and examples of common pathology detected by MRI are noted.

#### **Methods**

The authors did a MEDLINE search using "MRI" and "elbow" for studies and used this data along with their clinical experience and unnamed textbooks in the generation of this paper.

#### Results

#### Imaging Sequences and Technique

Elbow MRI is usually performed with patient supine and arm at the side. T1-weighted images are used to show anatomic detail, and T2-weighted images are used to show alteration in water content. Short tau inversion recovery (STIR) and fat-suppressed T2-weighted images are best to show fluid and edema. Gradient-echo sequences highlight metallic and hemosiderin/blood products, and cartilage especially when used with fat-suppression. Intravenous (IV) contrast is used for evaluation of soft tissue masses and synovial disorders. MR arthrography is useful for intra- and/or peri-articular conditions.

#### Pathologic Conditions

<u>Trauma:</u> Persistent tenderness at a suspected injury site without x-ray abnormality may be an indication for MRI to detect occult fracture. The posterior fat pad sign on x-ray corresponds to occult fracture in >75% of patients. Fat-suppressed T2-weighted or STIR or sequences are best.

The anterolateral radial head lacks cartilage and a subchondral plate, predisposing it to fracture.

In children with x-ray showing effusion, MRI is used for physeal injury evaluation, such as Little Leaguer's elbow. This is best seen with coronal fat-suppressed gradient-echo sequences.

MRI has added benefit (over plain x-ray or CT) in the detection of loose bodies because it is better at showing non-ossified loose bodies. These are usually in the coronoid or olecranon fossa.

The ulnar collateral ligament (UCL or MCL), especially the functionally-important anterior bundle, is easily identified on coronal sequences with the forearm supinated. MRI detection of the full-thickness anterior UCL tears is excellent. However, for partial tears it is poor, unless used with intra-articular contrast.

The lateral UCL is the most important stabilizer of varus stress and is seen on one slice of the coronal

view just posterior to the radial head/neck. However, identification of tears of the LUCL is difficult.

Biceps and triceps tendon injury is visualized on MRI, and like the anterior UCL, complete ruptures are easily seen and partial tears are not, but are identified as thickening and/or intrasubstance signal change. Occasionally, a complete rupture of the biceps can be mistaken for a partial tear if the bicipital aponeurosis (lacertus fibrosus) tethers the tendon, preventing retraction. Olecranon bursitis may be seen in cases of triceps injury.

<u>Degenerative conditions:</u> MRI is very good at detecting lateral epicondylitis (or epicondylosis) on coronal fat-suppressed T2-weighted or STIR sequences, with an abnormal extensor carpi radialis brevis tendon. MRI may help to differentiate between osteoarthrosis, osteochondritis dissecans, radial tunnel syndrome, posterolateral rotator instability, occult fracture, and/or loose bodies. Medial epicondylitis is not imaged commonly; however MRI may be useful to rule out UCL injury or ulnar neuritis.

<u>Infection:</u> MRI can help to distinguish a joint effusion from superficial cellulitis or bursitis, but cannot differentiate between normal, hemarthrotic or purulent intra-articular fluid. Septic arthritis may show shaggy contrast enhanced rim. Intravenous contrast aids in localization of focal adjacent abscesses.

Osteomyelitis is well seen with MRI on almost all sequences. Clinical correlation is important since the findings may mimic neoplasm or osteonecrosis.

Other conditions: Osteochondritis dissecans is an idiopathic or repetitive trauma injury of articular cartilage affecting adolescents. Usually the capitellum is involved, and the possibility of a pseudo-defect should be considered. This anatomic variant is seen on coronal images at the junction of the lateral humeral condyle and posterior capitlleum. The normal trochlear groove may also be mistaken for an osteochondral lesion. MRI is very useful in determining the viability and stability of an osteochondral fragment. Fluid or contrast tracking behind the fragment indicates instability,

and fragment enhancement post-contrast is suggestive of adequate blood supply and bone viability.

MRI can be used when conservative treatment of compression neuropathies has failed, or when neuropathy recurs post-surgery. This includes cubital tunnel, radial tunnel, posterior interosseous nerve, and pronator syndromes. Major peripheral nerves can usually be traced on sequential axial images.

Diagnosis of inflammatory arthritides, crystal deposition, pigmented villonodular synovitis (PVNS), and idiopathic synovial osteochondromatosis can be done with MRI. Rheumatoid arthritis is especially apparent with the avid enhancement of pannus post-IV contrast.

MRI is very helpful in cases of unknown soft tissue masses, including identifying enlarged lymph nodes, lipomas, ganglia, hemangiomas, neurofibromas, PVNS, and synovial osteochondromatosis.

#### **Conclusions**

MRI is a useful tool in the evaluation of a variety of elbow disorders. Knowledge of some of the specific technical details of MRI may help in the detection of some conditions.

#### **Clinical Relevance**

The chiropractor and chiropractic orthopedist will encounter patients with a variety of elbow disorders and this helps to categorize disorders that can be accurately (and some not so accurately) detected on MRI. Knowledge of these disorders and imaging techniques aids in the diagnosis, and hence management of these patients with these conditions.

#### **JACO Editorial Summary:**

- This is a concise non-systematic review of elbow MRI, written by orthopedists and radiologists
- The purpose of this review was to highlight the technical aspects of MRI relevant to the elbow and to demonstrate its effectiveness in the identification

- of a variety of conditions including traumatic, degenerative and infectious conditions
- MRI is valuable tool in the non-invasive evaluation of a wide variety of elbow disorders

#### Summary

This concise review demonstrates the non-invasive ability of MRI to detect a variety of conditions and the technical aspects of sequence and anatomical slice selection as a helpful factor. Various elbow disorders are discussed in relation to MRI including traumatic, degenerative, infectious, and other conditions such as compression neuropathies and soft tissues masses.

Reviewer note: This article does not discuss the ability of MRI (or lack thereof) to detect various elbow conditions when the technical aspects are not optimal – open or low-field MRI, lack of dedicated surface coils, patient motion, poor positioning, inappropriate slice planning and pulse sequence selection, etc - the selection of a technically adequate imaging facility is a factor in the performance of MRI in the evaluation of elbow (and other) disorders that cannot be ignored.

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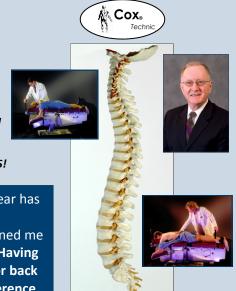
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Anna-Christina Bevelaqua, MD, Catherine L. Hayter, MBBS, Joseph H. Feinberg, MD, Scott A. Rodeo, MD

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#### **Authors' Abstract**

Electrodiagnostic studies are used to anatomically localize nerve injuries. These tests help differentiate between cervical radiculopathies, brachial plexopathies, and peripheral nerve injuries. They also help to identify or rule out other underlying neurological diseases and disorders. In this case report, a 22-year-old male swimmer presented with left finger extensor weakness following pull-up exercises. Left wrist extension remained intact.

Electrodiagnostic testing revealed a severe but incomplete posterior interosseous neuropathy. Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) confirmed inflammation of the nerve in the forearm. Posterior interosseous neuropathy is an uncommon but well-studied condition. Typically, this condition presents with weakness in finger and thumb extension with preserved wrist extension as the extensor carpi radialis longus is innervated proximal to the site of nerve compression in most cases. It is important to understand the anatomic course and distribution of the radial nerve in order to make an accurate diagnosis. Once the anatomy is understood, electrodiagnostic testing may be used to identify the location of nerve injury and exclude other disorders.

Posterior interosseous nerve, nerve injury, electromyography (EMG), electrodiagnostics, finger extension weakness.

#### Background

Posterior interosseous neuropathy (PIN) is an entrapment neuropathy of the deep branch of the radial nerve in the forearm. The deep branch of the radial nerve is primarily a motor nerve, and patients suffering from PIN may present with finger and thumb extension weakness without sensory abnormalities. The symptomatology associated with PIN makes it difficult to clinically differentiate from lateral epicondylitis, radial nerve injury, radial tunnel syndrome, cervical radiculopathy, and brachial plexopathy.

Familiarity with the anatomy of the course that the radial nerve follows in the forearm is important when considering the diagnosis of PIN. Judicious use of electrodiagnostic studies can aid the clinician in localizing the injury to the posterior interosseous nerve, as well as excluding other similar disorders and determining the severity and prognosis of the injury to the posterior interosseous nerve.

#### Methods

This is a case report of a 22-year-old left-handed male that presented with weakness of the fingers of

#### Keywords

the left hand. Three months prior, the patient had been doing pull-ups when he became aware of tightness and discomfort at the lateral aspect of his left elbow. The following day, he found that he could not extend his left arm due to pain and tightness. Over the next few days his pain improved but he found that he had weakness upon extension of the fingers of his left hand. This was not associated with any other radicular symptomatology.

When he presented for examination three months after the initial episode he was found to have subtle atrophy of the muscles in his left forearm and weakness of the second, third, fourth and fifth fingers at the metacarpophalangeal joints of the left hand as well as left thumb extension. The remainder of upper extremity motor, sensory and reflex function was entirely intact. No other salient physical examination findings were noted.

#### Results

Six months after the initial episode, electrodiagnostic studies including electromyography and nerve conduction studies were performed, as were radiographs and MRI of the left elbow. The radiographs of the left elbow did not reveal any acute abnormalities of the bony structures. The MRI of the left elbow demonstrated hyperintensity of signal within the posterior interosseous nerve. The results of his electrodiagnostic testing included slowed left radial motor conduction velocity across the elbow, prolonged distal latency, and reduced amplitude at the forearm and the spiral groove when compared to the right side.

Electromyograhic needle examination revealed severely abnormal spontaneous activity, discrete recruitment pattern, and decreased recruitment interval in posterior interosseous innervated muscles. The radially innervated brachioradialis was found to be normal. The authors found these findings to be consistent with a diagnosis of severe but incomplete left posterior interosseous neuropathy. The patient subsequently underwent two months of physical therapy and at one year follow-up he was found to have full range of motion

of the left wrist and fingers, as well as 85% improvement of finger strength.

#### **Conclusions**

Patients with PIN syndrome typically present with loss of motor function without sensory loss. In contrast, patients with radial tunnel syndrome (RTS) typically present with lateral proximal forearm pain rather than weakness. Posterior interosseous neuropathy syndrome is a result of compression of the PIN outside of the radial tunnel. Radial tunnel syndrome can be difficult to distinguish from lateral epicondylitis, and electrodiagnostic testing in RTS is often not helpful, whereas EMG/NCS are diagnostic in PIN syndrome.

In this case, electrodiagnostic testing was effective in localization of the level of the nerve injury. Brachial neuritis is also included in the differential diagnosis but was excluded in this case due to a lack of presentation of classic symptomatology seen in brachial neuritis such as cold or flu-like symptoms, history of prior surgery, or severe pain followed by weakness although this patient did have short-lived pain.

#### Clinical Relevance

The clinical diagnosis of PIN syndrome can be difficult, but electrodiagnostic testing and MRI are of great value in arriving at a correct diagnostic conclusion. Posterior interosseous neuropathy (PIN) syndrome can occur following trauma to the elbow (most often Monteggia fractures where the proximal ulna is fractured and the radial head dislocates posteriorly), following surgical release of the common extensor tendon for treatment of lateral epicondylitis, following prolonged compression by a forearm orthosis, or spontaneously.

#### **JACO Editorial Summary:**

- Posterior interosseous neuropathy is a rare but well-described syndrome.
- Brachial neuritis may also be included in the differential diagnosis, but in this case was

- excluded due to a lack of concomitant symptomatology suggestive of brachial neuritis.
- Electrodiagnostic testing is of great value in the diagnosis of PIN syndrome, and in the differentiation from other disorders that may present similarly.
- PIN syndrome is primarily a motor disorder, vis-à-vis RTS which includes pain in the lateral proximal elbow which typically worsens with activity.
- MRI is helpful to exclude mass effect with compression of the nerve, as well as identifying hyperintensity of signal within the posterior interosseous nerve.
- MRI may demonstrate fatty atrophy in the chronic phase.
- PIN syndrome is typically treated conservatively with activity modification, splinting, physical therapy, anti-inflammatory medication, and/or corticosteroid injections when no identifiable cause is found on imaging studies.
- If the patient does not demonstrate satisfactory improvement within six months, spontaneous improvement is unlikely and surgical consultation becomes necessary.
- An understanding of the anatomic course and distribution of the radial nerve is necessary in order to make an accurate diagnosis of PIN syndrome.

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## Spinal Manipulation, Medication, or Home Exercise with Advice for Acute and Subacute Neck Pain

Gert Bronfort, DC, PhD; Ron Evans, DC, MS; Alfred V. Anderson, DC, MD; Kenneth H. Svendsen, MS; Yiscah Bracha, MS; and Richard H. Grimm, MD, MPH, PhD

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**Authors' Abstract:** The Goal of the study was to test the hypothesis that spinal manipulation therapy (SMT) is more effective than medication or home exercise with advice (HEA) for acute and sub-acute neck pain.

**Study Design:** Randomized, controlled trial.

**Objective:** To determine the relative efficacy of spinal manipulation therapy (SMT), medication and home exercise with advice (HEA) for acute and sub-acute neck pain in both the short and long term.

**Summary of Background Data:** Mechanical neck pain is a common condition that affects an estimated 70% of persons at some point in their lives. Little research exists to guide the choice of therapy for acute and sub-acute neck pain.

**Methods:** Two-hundred and seventy-two (272) persons aged 18 to 65 who had non-specific neck pain for 2 to 12 weeks were included in the study. The primary outcome was participant-rated pain, measured at 2, 4, 8, 12, 26, and 52 weeks after randomization. Secondary measures were self-reported disability, global improvement, medication use, satisfaction, general health status, and adverse events. Blinded evaluation of neck

motion was performed at 4 and 12 weeks. Objective measures of cervical spine motion were measured at 4 and 12 weeks by 7 trained examiners using a CA6000 Spine Motion Analyzer.

**Results:** For pain, SMT had a statistically significant advantage over medication after 8, 12, 26 and 52 weeks, and HEA was superior to medication at 26 weeks. No important differences in pain were found between SMT and HEA at any time point.

**Conclusion:** For participants with acute and sub-acute neck pain, SMT was more effective than medication in both the short and long term. However, a few instructional sessions of HEA resulted in similar outcomes at most time points.

#### Background

Neck pain is a prevalent condition that nearly three quarters of persons experience at some point in their lives. One of the most commonly reported symptoms in primary care settings, neck pain results in millions of ambulatory health care visits each year and increasing health care costs. Although it is not life-threatening, neck pain can have a negative effect on productivity and overall quality of life.

#### **Methods**

The trial was conducted from 2001 to 2007 in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Five-hundred and four (504) persons were evaluated for eligibility, of which 272 were randomly assigned to one of the 3 groups: 90 to the medication group, 91 to the SMT group, and 91 to the HEA group:

#### SMT Group

- 6 chiropractors with a minimum of 5 years experience served as the primary providers.
- Visits lasted 5-20 minutes, included a brief history and examination of the cervical and thoracic spine.
- Treatment focused on areas of spinal hypomobilty using diversified technique of low amplitude high velocity, but also including some low amplitude spinal adjustments.
- The specific spinal level and the number of treatment sessions were left to the discretion of the provider over the 12 weeks.
- Adjunct therapy common to clinical practice included limited light soft tissue massage, assisted stretching, hot and cold packs.
- Advice on activity levels was recommended as needed.

#### **Medication Group**

- A licensed MD provided care with the focus of treatment on prescription medication.
- Visits lasted 15-20 minutes including a brief history and examination.
- The first line of therapy was non-steroidal antiinflammatory drugs, acetaminophen, or both.
- If non-responsive, second line of therapy was narcotic medications.
- Muscle relaxants were also used
- Activity level was modified as needed.

#### **HEA Group**

- Home exercise with advice was provided in two 1-hour sessions, 1-2 weeks apart.
- 6 therapists provided instruction with focus on simple self-mobilization exercise of the neck and shoulder joints.

- The delivery method was 1 on 1, individualized to the patient's abilities.
- Participants were instructed to do 5 to 10 repetitions of each exercise, 6-8 times a day.
- Printed material of each exercise was provided as well as basic information about anatomy and postural instructions and demonstrations on how to lift were given.

#### Conclusions

Spinal Manipulation Therapy (SMT) was more effective than medication in both the short and long term. However, a few instructional sessions of HEA resulted in similar outcomes at most time points. Group differences in most secondary outcomes were similar to those of the primary outcomes. Spinal Manipulation Therapy was superior to medication at the end of treatment and during follow-up in terms of global improvement and participant satisfaction. Home exercise with advice (HEA) was superior to medication in both the short and long term for satisfaction with care and for long-term medication use.

#### **Clinical Relevance**

Health care practitioners who treat patients with musculoskeletal complaints should take note and may need to alter their approach to the care of neck pain. The doctor of chiropractic should take extra note as he/she may be in the best position to offer the best care by combining their skills of SMT with education as to how the patient can continue their treatment at home. Providing appropriate exercises and postural management as well as education in-office plus take home materials should aid in overall patient education and positive outcome.

#### **JACO Editorial Summary:**

- SMT was more effective for acute and sub-acute neck pain than medication.
- However, a few instructional sessions of HEA resulted in similar outcomes at most time points
- Participants were excluded who had any of the following conditions: cervical spine instability, fracture, referred pain, neurologic deficits, existing cardiac disease, blood clotting

- disorders, DISH, infectious disease, substance abuse, pregnancy, previous cervical spine surgery or involved in litigation.
- Overall, the greatest changes in cervical spine motion were observed in the HEA group.
- Participant satisfaction was greatest in the SMT group and lowest in the medication group.
- No serious adverse events were reported in the study. Expected, non-serious adverse events that are typical to these treatments did occur and were all transient in nature.
- This study was intended to be pragmatic in nature and to answer clinical questions regarding commonly used treatment approaches by approximating how they are delivered in practice.

#### **Summary**

In light of the current legislation regarding national health care, health care providers who treat neck pain should pay attention to this study and take note as to how they can best position their practice to not only provide consistent and beneficial outcomes but also at a reasonable cost. The doctor of chiropractic is in a unique position to do this. Failure to do so, may not only result in their exclusion from participation at a personal/local level but as a profession as a whole.

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