Chiropractic Management of Tendinopathy

Chiropractors offer a number of drug-free interventions for treating common tendon disorders.

Pfefer MT, Cooper SR, Uhl NL. *J Manipulative Physiol Ther* 2009 Jan;32(1):41-52.

BACKGROUND
Common tendon disorders, described under the terms tendinopathy, tendonitis and tendinosis, are associated with increased time away from work and place a burden on healthcare resources. While nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) and corticosteroid injections are commonly prescribed for tendinopathy, their use may lead to a variety of side effects and has not been sufficiently researched. Evidence shows, however, that tendinopathy is one of the conditions doctors of chiropractic frequently treat through a variety of conservative therapies, without the need for co-management with medications or injections.

THE OBJECTIVE of this literature synthesis was to review evidence describing interventions used by doctors of chiropractic to treat tendinopathy.

THIS STUDY conducted a search of literature through the following major healthcare databases: PubMed; the Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature; the Index to Chiropractic Literature; the Manual, Alternative and Natural Therapy Index System; the National Guidelines Clearinghouse; the Database of Abstracts of Reviews of Effects; and Turning Research Into Practice. The results of the search were screened and rated for relevance, yielding 15 systematic reviews that were analyzed in detail.

RESULTS
- Evidence shows that ultrasound therapy can lead to clinically significant improvements in the treatment of calcific tendonitis.
- Benefits of manipulation and mobilization in the treatment of tendinopathy have been documented by limited evidence.
- Limited evidence also documents the use of supervised exercises, eccentric exercise, friction massage, acupuncture, laser therapy, bracing, orthotics and cryotherapy for treating tendinopathy.
- Instrument-assisted soft-tissue mobilization and active/passive release-type procedures are plausible and promising, but more evidence is needed to evaluate their effectiveness in the treatment of tendinopathy.

WHO MAY BE AFFECTED?
According to the literature, the risk for developing tendinopathy increases with age and is associated with being overweight and obese. These patients are also likely to take longer to recover.

CAVEATS
There is a need for more evidence assessing short- and long-term outcomes in the treatment of tendinopathy through conservative interventions.

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The research described in this column comes from credible, peer-reviewed journals. It is intended to serve as a resource for practitioners and patients to assist them in consideration of various healthcare options and does not replace clinical judgment.