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Clinical Outcomes and Return to Sport after Arthroscopic Rotator Cuff Repair in Middle-Aged and Elderly recreational baseball players: Comparison of middle-aged and elderly generations

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Introduction and Background

Baseball is enjoyed as a lifelong sport, with leagues for people over 60. Rotator cuff tears, common after middle age due to degeneration or injury, often require surgery. While outcomes in young and athletes are documented, limited research exists on middle-aged and elderly players. This study evaluates arthroscopic rotator cuff repair in players aged 40+ and compares results between middle-aged and elderly groups.

Material and Method

The study included 38 male baseball players aged over 40 who underwent arthroscopic repair from 2009 to 2024, with at least one year follow-up. Parameters assessed were intraoperative findings, range of motion (ROM), ASES score, return-to-sport rate, time to return, re-tears. Patients were divided into middle-aged (< 60) and older (> 60) groups. Statistical analyses used the Wilcoxon signed-rank test, chi-square and Wilcoxon test ($p < 0.05$).

Results

Average age was 61 years; mean follow-up was 21 months. The group had 19 middle-aged and 19 elderly players. Intraoperative findings 4 partial-thickness tears, 8 small tears, 11 medium tears, 8 large tears, 5 massive tears, and 2 isolated subscapularis tears. ROM improved significantly, with flexion increasing from an average of 139° to 161°. ASES scores improved from an average of 41 to 96 (both < 0.001). No significant differences in ROM and improvements were observed between groups. The return-to-sport rate was 92%, with an average time to return of 10 months, with no significant difference between groups. Two elderly patients experienced re-tears but kept playing.

Conclusions

This study confirmed that arthroscopic rotator cuff repair in baseball players aged 40 and above results in significant improvements in clinical outcome, with a high return-to-sport rate of 92%. There were no significant differences in clinical outcome or return rates between middle-aged and older groups. This result suggests that surgical repair remains beneficial in those over 60. These findings support the usefulness of surgical intervention in elderly baseball players for rotator cuff tears.

