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Circumferential Labral Tears: 40% Occur After a Single Instability Event, and Arthroscopic Repair Provides Clinically Meaningful Improvements

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Introduction and Background

Circumferential labral tears characterized by complete detachment of the labrum from the glenoid rim, and studies have reported significant improvements in patient-reported outcome measures (PROMs) following arthroscopic repair in these patients. However, patients' perspectives on the meaningfulness of these outcomes remain unknown, and debate continues regarding whether circumferential tears can occur after a single instability event.

Material and Method

The study was conducted on patients who underwent shoulder arthroscopy for instability between February 2015 – July 2023. Patients with primary circumferential tears repaired using arthroscopic suture anchors, glenoid bone defect <13.5%, and minimum 24-month follow up were included. Analysis was conducted of patient demographics, clinical characteristics, and PROMs, including American Shoulder and Elbow Surgeons (ASES) score, Western Ontario Shoulder Instability Index (WOSI), and Visual Analogue Scale (VAS). Patients achieving the MCID, SCB, and PASS thresholds for these scores were determined.

Results

Circumferential tears were identified in 3.6% (n = 41) of 1,147 patients undergoing arthroscopic procedures for shoulder instability. Of these, 31 patients (mean age 29.5 ± 9.3 years, 90% male, mean instability events 5.5 ± 6.9, mean follow up 60.4 ± 30.1 months) meeting the inclusion criteria were analyzed. 38% (n = 12) of patients had a single instability event with, six participating in contact sports and three in overhead or throwing sports, all at a competitive level. The proportions of patients who achieved MCID, PASS, and SCB thresholds were as follows: ASES (100, 80.6, 80.6), WOSI_{Total} (100, 90.3, 80.6), and VAS (90.3, 87.1, 80.6).

Conclusions

A single instability event may result in a circumferential tear in competitive athletes involved in contact, overhead, or throwing sports. **Reassuringly**, most patients who underwent arthroscopic repair of circumferential tears using suture anchors can achieve successful clinically meaningful outcomes at a mean follow-up of approximately five years.

