
Postoperative intra-articular viscosupplementation for treatment of knee conditions

Record Status

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Citation

Postoperative intra-articular viscosupplementation for treatment of knee conditions. Lansdale: HAYES, Inc.. Health Technology Brief Publication. 2013

Authors' conclusions

The knee is a synovial joint, a joint in which the ends of the articulating bones are separated by a joint cavity and are enclosed in a joint capsule, which contains synovial fluid. Hyaluronic acid (HA) is an important component of synovial fluid, has viscous and elastic properties, and acts as a lubricant during slow joint movement and as a shock absorber during rapid joint movement. Common knee injuries include anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) sprains, the degenerative disorder osteoarthritis (OA) or cartilage (chondral) damage, and meniscal tears. These injuries occur in approximately 200,000 individuals each year in the United States. Any of these knee disorders may lead to pain, swelling, effusion, limited range of motion (ROM), catching, locking, and/or giving way of the affected knee as well as reduced mobility. Patients who do not respond to medical treatments may benefit from surgery. An extensive variety of surgical techniques are available for treating cartilage damage or OA of the knee or delaying the progression of cartilage damage to OA. Viscosupplementation is the intra-articular injection of exogenous HA into a synovial joint. This technique has been used successfully and is now an accepted standard approach for treating OA of the knee prior to surgery, particularly in patients who have had an inadequate response to conservative approaches, simple analgesics, or nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs). This success has led to the investigation of viscosupplementation following surgery for several knee conditions, including ACL tears or ruptures, cartilage damage/OA of the knee, and meniscal tears.

Final publication URL

The report may be purchased from:<http://www.hayesinc.com/hayes/crd/?crd=15877>

Indexing Status

Subject indexing assigned by CRD

MeSH

Humans; Injections, Intra-Articular; Osteoarthritis, Knee; Viscosupplementation

Language Published

English

Country of organisation

United States

English summary

An English language summary is available.

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AccessionNumber

32014000397

Date abstract record published

21/02/2014