Chronic Tennis Elbow
Regenerative Medicine Almost Halves the Recurrence Rates

Lateral epicondylalgia, tennis elbow, affects an estimated 3% of the population, and is connected to repetitive stress activities.¹ The condition was previously considered relatively benign and self-limiting,² but research has found one-year recurrence rates reaching 72% in usual care groups.³ Epicondylalgia was also previously thought to be primarily an inflammatory condition (epicondylitis), but current science demonstrates that it is more a degenerative process than an inflammatory process.⁴ With the high one-year recurrence rates coming to light and a new understanding of the histopathology, treatment options have improved.

Corticosteroid injections have been found ineffective beyond short-term pain relief, and may even interfere with the effectiveness of physical therapy. Physical therapy has been found to greatly reduce recurrence rates, making it the top evidence-based recommendation for first-line treatment.¹³,¹⁴ Within physical therapy’s treatment options, Primary Spine & Rehab practices a manual therapy technique called Mulligan that can improve results and patient satisfaction with more rapid pain relief than conventional physical therapy. A single application of Mulligan technique can immediately increase pain-free grip force and improve pressure-pain thresholds, and with successive treatments, overall pain reduction is more than tripled each week of the first three weeks (compared to usual therapy).¹⁰-¹³ Additionally, the dry needling treatment practiced at Primary Spine & Rehab has been shown to create pain relief on par with lidocaine injections.¹⁴-¹⁷

When epicondylitis proves recalcitrant to first-line treatments, Primary Spine & Rehab offers regenerative medicine to further increase the likelihood of your patient’s success. Specifically, platelet-rich plasma (PRP) treatments for tennis elbow involve the needling of extensor tendons with a serum of concentrated platelets and leukocytes spun down from autologous blood. The most authoritative, long-term study to date finds that, in cases of chronic tennis elbow that has failed usual care, PRP reduces the rate of significant elbow tenderness 46% (29.1% versus 54%) at two-year follow-up.¹⁸ Epicondylalgia is largely considered an inadequate healing response, and PRP involves the targeted application of autologous healing factors. So PRP makes for a very logical treatment in chronic tennis elbow. Ultrasound observations have associated PRP with visible reductions in tendon fissures, reductions in pathological areas, reductions in Doppler hyperemia, and increases in vascularization at the myotendinous junction.¹⁹,²⁰

When you have patients presenting with epicondylalgia, please consider a referral to Primary Spine & Rehab. Primary Spine & Rehab’s physical therapy program offers proven-effective advanced techniques that are beyond standard physical therapy practice. For the handful of patients who prove recalcitrant to first-line treatments, Primary Spine & Rehab also offers regenerative medicine treatments to directly address the tendon’s failed healing response.

Please offer Primary Spine & Rehab to your patients.

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REFERENCES


