



AOA & AKS Joint Statement – Osteoarthritis and Knee Arthroscopy

The Australian Orthopaedic Association (AOA) and the Australian Knee Society are concerned that a recent Bureau of Health Information Healthcare in Focus report contains incorrect, misleading and harmful analysis regarding knee arthroscopy and its relationship with osteoarthritis and age.

The Healthcare in Focus report states “(Knee arthroscopy) is commonly used on patients with osteoarthritis despite a lack of evidence of benefit for this condition.” This statement is extremely misleading, as patients that undergo knee arthroscopy in the presence of osteoarthritis of varying degrees, do so to treat co-existing pathology, and not to treat the osteoarthritis itself. These other co-pathologies include: symptomatic loose bodies; obstructive meniscal tears; obstructive chondral lesions; repairable meniscus tears; inflammatory joint conditions and; ligamentous pathologies. Current administrative datasets are inadequate to examine the indications for knee arthroscopic surgery.

The report also states “The only group for which there is a demonstrated clinical benefit for knee arthroscopy is among people aged under 50 years with no osteoarthritis diagnosis.” There is no evidence that age effects outcomes in arthroscopic knee surgery. In fact, a 2014 study¹ reported better outcomes for both rehabilitation and arthroscopic interventions for 55- to 64-year-old patients compared to younger patients aged 45 to 55 years. Most importantly, the article fails to recognise that the indication for surgery is the key determination of treatment regardless of the presence of osteoarthritis. A careful, personalised review of the clinical scenario after a thoughtful discussion between the surgeon and patient about the relative merits of the procedure versus ongoing nonoperative treatment is necessary and considered best-practice. Simply put, judicious and pragmatic shared clinical decision-making is superior to arbitrarily chosen age cut-offs altering knee management.

AOA & AKS agrees that there is accepted evidence that patients with uncomplicated osteoarthritis do not benefit from arthroscopy, as detailed in our 2014 Position Statement with the Australian Knee Society (AKS). Given the increasingly high disease burden of knee osteoarthritis in Australia, ongoing evidence-based and reasoned discussion is vital. The AOA and AKS strongly support further consultation with the Bureau of Health in this regard.

The current detailed AKS position statement about the role of arthroscopy in the presence of arthritis can be found at

<http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/2325967117728677>

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1 Gauffin H, Tagesson S, Meunier A, Magnusson H, Kvist J. Knee arthroscopic surgery is beneficial to middle-aged patients with meniscal symptoms: a prospective, randomised, singleblinded study. *Osteoarthritis Cartilage*. 2014;22(11):1808-1816.