

Efficient Follow-Up After Orthopaedic Injections In The Ultrasound Department

Orthopaedics / Foot & Ankle / Miscellaneous

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Keywords: Injection, Outcomes, Follow-Up

Background

Injections are offered to thousands of patients suffering with a range of musculoskeletal conditions every year. Most are cortisone injections.

Each injection serves both a diagnostic and a therapeutic purpose.

The initial response to injection (Local Anaesthetic) helps confirm the clinical diagnosis.

The duration of pain relief (steroid) is unpredictable.

These dual goals make planning a follow-up appointment difficult.

A delayed appointment might affect patient recall about the extent of initial benefit.

At an early review, the benefits will usually still be apparent, but may wear off later.

Objectives

After injection, a routine follow-up appointment is usually booked after 6 weeks.

Change in Practice

We provided patients with a Pain Diary to complete and return 6 weeks after their injection. According to the pain score at 6 weeks and the initial response to the injection, patients were either offered a review appointment or discharged with SOS review.

Study Design & Methods

We reviewed the follow-up appointments of 104 injection episodes. All were referred by a single surgeon over a 12-month period. The need for a follow-up appointment over the next 3 years was documented, and the time interval at which that hospital visit occurred was calculated. By comparing this with a standard 6-week appointment, the number of saved appointments was calculated.

Results

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Only 9% of patients in this study benefitted from a 6-week appointment.

Forty-three percent of the patients in this study required no follow-up at all.

Of the 57% seen after their injection, most came after three months, when the benefits waned, according to their personal need. Review at 6 weeks would have served no useful purpose for these patients.

Appointment required?

No	45	(43%)
Yes	59	(57%)

Time after injection

At or before 6 weeks	9	(9%)
Within 90 days	11	(11%)
After 90 days (3-18 months)	39	(38%)

Conclusions

Standard practice after MSK injection is to review the patient after an interval of 6 weeks at a face-to-face outpatient clinic appointment.

The majority of injections are still effective at this time interval. Many will wear off later, and if the patient has been discharged there is difficulty obtaining further help in a timely fashion.

Using a pain diary allows patients to provide feedback about the response to injection and the follow-up arrangements can then be tailored to individual need.

Routine follow-up of patients after injection treatment is inefficient. A pain diary system allows follow-up arrangements to be made as and when required. In 91% of cases an outpatient appointment was saved.