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Circular HSC (SQSD) (NICE IPG775) 21/23

Subject: NICE Interventional Procedures Guideline IPG775 - Biodegradable subacromial spacer insertion for rotator cuff tears

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Summary of Contents:
This guidance provides evidence-based recommendations on biodegradable subacromial spacer insertion for rotator cuff tears. This involves inserting a balloon-shaped device between the top of the shoulder blade and the upper arm bone to reduce pain and improve shoulder function.

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Related documents:
HSC (SQSD) 14/22

Superseded documents
None

Status of Contents:
For action

Implementation:
Immediate

Additional copies:
Available to download from
https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/topics/safety-and-quality-standards/national-institute-health-and-care-excellence-nice

Dear Colleague

NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR HEALTH AND CARE EXCELLENCE (NICE): INTERVENTIONAL PROCEDURES GUIDELINE IPG775 - BIODEGRADABLE SUBACROMIAL SPACER INSERTION FOR ROTATOR CUFF TEARS

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) produces guidance as part of the Interventional Procedure Programme. Clinicians who have developed new procedures send these to NICE to evaluate their effectiveness. Cost is not considered as part of this evaluation. Solely for this programme, NICE communicates directly with HSC organisations in Northern Ireland and consequently Departmental bi-monthly circulars are normally only required. An exception has been made for this due to the evidence identified on this procedure.

The advice in the NICE guideline states:

When debridement is a suitable option, biodegradable subacromial spacer insertion for rotator cuff tears should not be used.

HSC organisations also should note that the Department expects them to comply with this guidance in their delivery of services to patients when debridement is a suitable option.

Indications and current treatments

People who have rotator cuff tears may have shoulder pain and weakness, with reduced shoulder function, leading to a reduced quality of life. Rotator cuff tears can be caused by an injury or can develop gradually. They can be minor or severe depending on the degree of damage to the tendons. Minor tears to the rotator cuff are very common and may not cause any symptoms at all. Diagnosis is usually by ultrasound or MRI.

Conservative treatment may include physical therapy, pharmacological treatments (including pain relief, and topical or oral non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medicines) and corticosteroid injections. If the tear is severe or has not responded to other treatments, surgical interventions such as debridement, rotator cuff repair, subacromial smoothing, tendon transfer or shoulder arthroplasty may be needed.

Outline of the procedure

Inserting a biodegradable subacromial spacer aims to improve pain and restore shoulder function in people who have irreparable rotator cuff tears. The aim is to reduce subacromial friction by lowering the humeral head during shoulder abduction. It is a less invasive and potentially safer alternative to reverse shoulder arthroplasty or tendon transfer and has shorter procedure and rehabilitation times.

The procedure is done under general or regional anaesthesia. The subacromial space is visualised using either arthroscopy or mini-open surgery. The damaged area is surgically cleared. Measurements are taken to determine the size of biodegradable spacer needed. The balloon-like spacer is then inserted into the subacromial space and inflated with saline solution. Once a sufficient volume is reached, the balloon is sealed and left in place. The balloon spacer is made from a biodegradable polymer and resorbs over about 1 year.

The full NICE interventional procedure guideline is available for download at:
https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ipg775

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