

A comparative study on the natural course of idiopathic frozen shoulder and the effectiveness of conservative treatment

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PURPOSE

The purpose of this study was to investigate the natural course of idiopathic frozen shoulder (IFS) and the role of active conservative treatment.

MATERIALS and METHODS

A prospective study was performed in IFS who underwent active conservative treatment consisting of intra-articular corticosteroid injection, staged passive stretching and regular check-up, and the outcome was investigated in 28 patients (study group) with average follow-up of 14.2 months. And a retrospective analysis was performed in 22 patients (control group) with IFS who didn't receive active treatment under physician's care, at average 40 months after diagnosis. The results were assessed by passive range of motion, residual symptom, pain and American Shoulder and Elbow Function Score.

RESULTS

In the study group, nineteen cases (68%) had residual symptoms, which were mild in most cases. Range of motion less than 80% of the normal side was noted in 3 cases (11%). In the control group, all patients except 2 (9%) felt that range of shoulder motion was normal and 3 patients (14%) had mild pain. The difference in function score was not significant statistically. The improvement was significantly faster in the study group. Long term clinical result of IFS was excellent in most cases even without active treatment. However, active conservative treatment seems to accelerate recovery significantly. Residual symptoms were frequent after treatment in mid-term, which nonetheless seem to improve spontaneously over time.

CONCLUSION

Surgical treatment for idiopathic frozen shoulder, if indicated, needs to be decided after long term follow-up.