



EMERSON

HealthWorks spoke with Paul Re, MD, chief of orthopedic surgery at Emerson Hospital, about new techniques for shoulder surgery.

SHOULDER SURGERY GETS A NEW APPROACH

WHAT IS ARTHROSCOPIC SHOULDER SURGERY?

Arthroscopy is a type of surgery that uses a camera, which allows us to get a detailed view of the anatomy, and microinstruments in order to make the necessary surgical repair. Traditionally, shoulder surgery was performed through one large incision—referred to as open surgery—but with arthroscopy we can perform the same procedures with smaller incisions.

WHAT TYPES OF SHOULDER PROBLEMS CAN BE TREATED?

We now use arthroscopy for most shoulder problems, including rotator cuff tears, joint instability, cartilage tears and arthritis.

WHAT ARE THE ADVANTAGES OF ARTHROSCOPIC SHOULDER SURGERY?

It is less painful and allows for a quicker recovery. Instead of making a large incision we make two or three small incisions of only four to five millimeters: one for our camera and the others for our microsurgical instruments. By looking with the camera, which magnifies the area four- to sixfold, we're able to see the entire joint and get a more complete view of the problem. Consequently, we're able to address more of the problem during one session of surgery.

SHOULD ALL SHOULDER SURGERY BE PERFORMED THIS WAY?

We consider arthroscopic technique to be a useful tool. Sometimes we can do the entire procedure arthroscopically, but sometimes we have to make additional small incisions. In some cases, open procedures are still the surgery of choice. This is true of large rotator cuff tears. We use the technique that is best for the patient; in certain cases, open surgery is the best approach.

IN WHAT OTHER AREAS IS ARTHROSCOPIC SURGERY USED?

We perform arthroscopic procedures in the wrist, knee, hip, ankle and elbow. So we're addressing pretty much all the joints arthroscopically.

WHAT OTHER MINIMALLY INVASIVE ORTHOPEDIC SURGICAL PROCEDURES ARE BEING PERFORMED NOW?

We now perform joint replacements using minimally invasive procedures. For example, we can perform a hip replacement via a four- to five-inch incision using special retractors that hold the soft tissue while we operate. We perform partial knee replacements and shoulder replacement as well using minimally invasive procedures.

WHAT IS THE RANGE OF ORTHOPEDIC SURGERY AVAILABLE AT EMERSON HOSPITAL?

Pretty much everything. We take care of fractures, arthroscopic knee ligament reconstructions, cartilage repairs and cartilage transplantation when appropriate. We also perform joint replacements. There is hardly an orthopedic surgical procedure we don't perform here at Emerson Hospital.

For more information on orthopedic surgery at Emerson Hospital, please call the Physician Referral Line at 978-287-3456, or visit our web site at www.emersonhospital.org.