

Repair of Massive Rotator Cuff Tears in Older than 70 Years

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Introduction: Major ruptures of the rotator cuff are common in elderly patients and their management has been a challenge for orthopaedic surgeons.

Methods: The present study was undertaken to evaluate the results obtained in patients older than 70 years who were treated with open surgical repair for massive ruptures of the rotator cuff tendons and to correlate the functional outcomes with the quality of the repairs. Between January 1991 and November 1994, 69 patients over 70 underwent rotator cuff repairs of massive tears with a minimum follow up of 2 years (mean of 3 years). These patients were evaluated before and after surgery with the UCLA score.

Results: The mean age was 75 years (range, 70-90), and female sex and right shoulder were predominant. A good bone-tendon repair was achieved in 55 patients, a regular bone-tendon repair in 5 patients, a poor bone tendon-repair in 8 patients and one patient had no repair. The mean UCLA rating score before surgery was 9.4 points and the mean post-operative score at final follow up was 31 points with an average improvement of 21.6 points. Satisfactory results were achieved in 78.2% of the patients (UCLA score equal or over 28).

Conclusion: Painful massive rotator cuff tears should be repaired irregardless of the patient's age.