

What is the clinical effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of conservative interventions for tendinopathy? An overview of systematic reviews of clinical effectiveness and systematic review of economic evaluations

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Plain English summary

Effectiveness of interventions for tendinopathy

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Lateral elbow tendinopathy (LET), or tennis elbow, is a common complaint. Despite the availability of conservative interventions, the condition is challenging to treat and prone to recurrent episodes.

This review provides an overview of systematic reviews summarising the current clinical effectiveness evidence, quantifies the number of trials that could contribute further evidence to existing systematic reviews and systematically reviews cost-effectiveness evidence.

A total of 29 systematic reviews met our inclusion criteria. Of these, five were considered high quality and evaluated further. In addition, 29 trials were identified that had been included in an intermediate-/low-quality review and 36 trials were identified that had not been included in a systematic review. These were mapped to existing systematic reviews where further evidence could provide updates. Two economic evaluations were identified and quality assessed.

No definitive conclusions can be drawn concerning the clinical effectiveness or cost-effectiveness of conservative interventions for LET. Issues hindering the synthesis and interpretation of results from trials need to be addressed, for example choice of outcome measures and limited long-term results. More well-designed and well-conducted trials of sufficient power are required. Subgroup analysis of existing trial data may be beneficial to ascertain whether or not certain patient groups are more likely to respond to treatment.

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