

# Surgical treatments compared with early structured physiotherapy in secondary care for adults with primary frozen shoulder: the UK FROST three-arm RCT

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**Declared competing interests of authors:** Lucksy Kottam reports grants from the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) Health Technology Assessment (HTA) programme for other work during the conduct of this study. South Tees Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust receives an educational grant to the Department of Trauma and Orthopaedic Surgery from DePuy Synthes (Warsaw, IN, USA; part of the Johnson & Johnson Medical Devices group). It also receives payment from DePuy Synthes for Lucksy Kottam as a study co-ordinator for the GLOBAL ICON Stemless Shoulder System Post Market

Clinical Follow Up Study: CT 1401. These payments are outside and unrelated to the submitted work. Catherine Hewitt is a member of the NIHR HTA Commissioning Board. Catriona McDaid receives funding from the British Orthopaedic Association (2014 to present). She is a member of the NIHR HTA and Efficacy and Mechanism Evaluation Editorial Board (2017 to present). Sarah E Lamb reports membership of the following boards: HTA Additional Capacity Funding Board 2012–15, HTA Clinical Trials Board 2010–15, HTA End of Life Care and Add on Studies Board 2015, HTA Funding Boards Policy Group (formerly Clinical Studies Group) 2010–15, HTA Maternal, Neonatal and Child Health Methods Group 2013–15, HTA Post-board funding teleconference 2010–15, HTA Primary Care Themed Call Board 2013–14, HTA Prioritisation Group 2010–15 and the NIHR Clinical Trials Unit Standing Advisory Committee 2012–16. Amar Rangan reports other grants from the NIHR HTA programme, Orthopaedic Research UK (London, UK) and Horizon 2020 during the conduct of the study. South Tees Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust receives an educational grant to the department from DePuy Synthes. The institution also receives payment from DePuy Synthes for Amar Rangan as the co-ordinating investigator for the GLOBAL ICON Stemless Shoulder System Post Market Clinical Follow Up Study: CT 1401. These are outside and unrelated to the submitted work. Joseph Dias reports grants from NIHR during the conduct of the study, outside the submitted work.

Published December 2020

DOI: 10.3310/hta24710

## Plain English summary

### The UK FROST three-arm RCT

Health Technology Assessment 2020; Vol. 24: No. 71

DOI: 10.3310/hta24710

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## Plain English summary

**F**rozen shoulder occurs when the soft tissue envelope around the shoulder joint becomes inflamed, scarred and contracted, making movement painful and stiff. It affects around 1 in 10 people and is more common in women. Most patients are treated in the community. Those who do not improve are offered treatments in hospital. This includes costly and invasive surgical options. It is unclear which treatment provides the best patient outcomes and is cost-effective.

UK FROST (UK FROzen Shoulder Trial) comprised 503 patients (from 35 UK hospitals) who randomly received one of three commonly offered treatments for frozen shoulder:

1. early physiotherapy to restore movement, including a steroid injection for pain relief
2. manipulation under anaesthesia, to stretch and tear the tight capsule to restore movement, and a steroid injection followed by physiotherapy
3. arthroscopic capsular release, which uses keyhole surgery, including manipulation, to restore movement, followed by physiotherapy with pain medication.

No important differences were found between the three treatments in shoulder function or pain at 12 months. Fewer patients who received arthroscopic capsular release required further treatment, and patients who received arthroscopic capsular release had slightly better shoulder function and pain outcomes than those who received the manipulation procedure or early physiotherapy. This improvement, however, was unlikely to be of clinical benefit to patients. Arthroscopic capsular release had slightly higher risks and substantially higher costs. Six serious complications were reported in patients who received arthroscopic capsular release (mostly owing to co-existing health problems) and two were reported in patients who received manipulation under anaesthesia. Physiotherapy was the least expensive treatment, but patients who received manipulation under anaesthesia had slightly better general health than those who received physiotherapy. Early physiotherapy with steroid injection could be accessed quicker than the surgical alternatives. Manipulation under anaesthesia cost more than physiotherapy but provided the best value for money. Patients in the study wanted early access to medical help to improve their shoulder problems.



ISSN 1366-5278 (Print)

ISSN 2046-4924 (Online)

Impact factor: 3.370

*Health Technology Assessment* is indexed in MEDLINE, CINAHL, EMBASE, the Cochrane Library and Clarivate Analytics Science Citation Index.

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## This report

The research reported in this issue of the journal was funded by the HTA programme as project number 13/26/01. The contractual start date was in October 2014. The draft report began editorial review in October 2019 and was accepted for publication in June 2020. The authors have been wholly responsible for all data collection, analysis and interpretation, and for writing up their work. This report has been published following a shortened production process and, therefore, did not undergo the usual number of proof stages and opportunities for correction. The HTA editors and publisher have tried to ensure the accuracy of the authors' report and would like to thank the reviewers for their constructive comments on the draft document. However, they do not accept liability for damages or losses arising from material published in this report.

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