Progressive exercise compared with best-practice advice, with or without corticosteroid injection, for rotator cuff disorders: the GRASP factorial RCT

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Declared competing interests of authors: Sally Hopewell is a member of the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) Health Technology Assessment (HTA) Clinical Evaluation and Trials committee (2018 to present). David J Keene holds a NIHR Postdoctoral Fellowship (PDF-2016-09-056). Ioana R Marian holds a NIHR Pre-Doctoral Fellowship (reference NIHR300479). Helen Dakin is partly funded by a NIHR Senior Research Fellowship through the Biomedical Research Centre (Oxford, UK). Andrew Carr has a patent BioPatch issued and is a member of the UK Research and Innovation/Medical Research Council Developmental Pathway Funding Scheme Panel. He was chief investigator of the NIHR HTA UK Rotator Cuff Surgery (UKUFF) trial and the Can Shoulder Arthroscopy Work (CSAW) trial. He is a consultant to the Novartis Pharmaceuticals UK Ltd Musculoskeletal Board (London, UK). He is chief investigator of a NIHR Innovation for Innovation (i4i) trial of a novel electrospun patch and of a Wellcome Trust (London, UK)-funded trial of a novel electrospun suture in rotator cuff repair surgery. He was director of the NIHR Musculoskeletal British Research Unit (2008–17) and is musculoskeletal theme lead for the NIHR Oxford Biomedical Research Centre (Oxford, UK). He reports personal fees from Novartis Pharmaceuticals UK Ltd Musculoskeletal Advisory Board. Zara Hansen receives personal fees from various health-care trusts and individuals to train health-care professionals in cognitive–behavioural approaches outside the submitted work. Anju Jaggi is currently a council member of the British Shoulder & Elbow Society (London, UK). She is co-applicant of the NIHR HTA PRO CURE (Partial Rotator Cuff Repair) trial. Chris Littlewood is chairperson of the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy Scientific Panel (London, UK). He is chief investigator of the NIHR postdoctoral fellowship-funded SPeEDy (Surgery versus Physiotherapist-led exercise for traumatic tears of the rotator cuff) study.
(reference PDF-2018-11-ST2-005). He was previously lead researcher for the NIHR Research for Patient Benefit-funded RaCeR (Rehabilitation following Rotator Cuff Repair) study (PB-PG-081620009) and chief investigator for the NIHR Doctoral Fellowship-funded SELF study (DRF-2011-04-090). Sarah E Lamb reports grants from the NIHR HTA programme during the conduct of the study and was a member 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 (2015); HTA Funding Boards Policy Group (formerly Clinical Studies Group) (2010–15); HTA Maternal, Newborn 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).

Published August 2021
DOI: 10.3310/hta25480

Plain English summary

The GRASP factorial RCT
Health Technology Assessment 2021; Vol. 25: No. 48
DOI: 10.3310/hta25480
NIHR Journals Library www.journalslibrary.nihr.ac.uk
Plain English summary

The rotator cuff is a group of muscles and tendons that stabilise the shoulder and allow it to move. Problems with the rotator cuff are very common. Symptoms include pain, which can affect a person’s ability to work, sleep well or perform daily tasks. It is not known which treatments work best for shoulder pain, how exactly they should be delivered and whether or not people do better if they are given a steroid injection.

The GRASP (Getting it Right: Addressing Shoulder Pain) trial tested whether or not people with a rotator cuff disorder would do better after a progressive exercise programme (supervised by a physiotherapist over six appointments spread out over 16 weeks) compared with a one-off best-practice advice session with a physiotherapist. The trial also tested whether or not giving a corticosteroid injection in the shoulder before starting either regime would help people recover more. We assessed the cost of delivering these treatments to the NHS.

We recruited 708 people from 20 NHS-based musculoskeletal centres in the UK. People were allocated to one of four treatment groups at random: (1) progressive exercise (six or fewer physiotherapy sessions), (2) best-practice advice (one physiotherapy session), (3) corticosteroid injection then progressive exercise (six or fewer physiotherapy sessions) or (4) corticosteroid injection then best-practice advice (one physiotherapy session). Trial participants were asked to complete a questionnaire that asked about their level of shoulder pain and their ability to perform basic daily tasks before treatment, and then again at 8 weeks and at 6 and 12 months.

Participants’ shoulder pain and function improved over time in each of the four treatment groups. The GRASP trial showed that there was no difference between the best-practice advice session with a physiotherapist and the more comprehensive exercise programme. Corticosteroid injection improved people’s shoulder pain and function, but only by a small amount and in the short term. No serious side effects were observed during the 12-month follow-up period. Best-practice advice in combination with corticosteroid injection is likely to be most cost-effective to the NHS.
Health Technology Assessment

ISSN 1366-5278 (Print)
ISSN 2046-4924 (Online)
Impact factor: 4.014

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

This journal is a member of and subscribes to the principles of the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) (www.publicationethics.org/).

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This report

The research reported in this issue of the journal was funded by the HTA programme as project number 15/26/06. The contractual start date was in October 2016. The draft report began editorial review in November 2020 and was accepted for publication in April 2021. The authors have been wholly responsible for all data collection, analysis and interpretation, and for writing up their work. 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.

This report presents independent research funded by the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR). The views and opinions expressed by authors in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the NHS, the NIHR, NETSCC, the HTA programme or the Department of Health and Social Care. If there are verbatim quotations included in this publication the views and opinions expressed by the interviewees are those of the interviewees and do not necessarily reflect those of the authors, those of the NHS, the NIHR, NETSCC, the HTA programme or the Department of Health and Social Care.

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