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Non-Surgical Treatment of Common Shoulder Injury in Baseball Players May Increase Chances of Return-to-Play

BALTIMORE, MD – Surgically repairing a painful shoulder injury in baseball players known as a SLAP tear (superior labral) varies widely and often doesn't allow for return to play at the same level as before the injury. However, researchers presenting their findings at the American Orthopaedic Society for Sports Medicine's Annual Meeting in Baltimore, Maryland suggest that nonsurgical treatment may be more beneficial.

"Our research showed that nonsurgical treatment of SLAP tears was more often successful than surgery, and in position players more frequently than for pitchers," said David Lintner, MD, lead researcher from Methodist Center for Sports Medicine in Houston, Texas. "We need more research to determine why the nonsurgical treatment was more beneficial to one population than the other, but our findings did illustrate that nonsurgical treatment should be preferred."

Lintner and his team performed a retrospective review of a 119 professional baseball players within a single organization who had persistent shoulder pain that limited their ability to compete. Sixty-eight patients had MRI-documented SLAP lesions and had failed initial physical therapy. All patients were initially treated non-surgically according to an algorithm focused on correcting the scapular dyskinesia and posterior capsular tightness. Of the 68 subjects with confirmed SLAP lesions, 45 were pitchers. Return to competition appeared to occur at a higher rate for position players than pitchers (73% vs. 40%).

"Returning to the same level of competition as before the injury, is almost always difficult for an athlete, and surgery is often thought of as the best avenue. With additional research, orthopaedists are finding different routes to treat some of the most common throwing injuries," said Lintner.

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The American Orthopaedic Society for Sports Medicine (AOSSM) is a world leader in sports medicine education, research, communication and fellowship, and includes national and international orthopaedic sports medicine leaders. The Society works closely with many other sports medicine specialists, including athletic trainers, physical therapists, family physicians, and others to improve the identification, prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation of sports injuries. AOSSM is also a founding partner of the [STOP Sports Injuries](#) campaign to prevent overuse and traumatic injuries in kids. For more information on AOSSM or the STOP Sports Injuries campaign, visit www.sportsmed.org or www.stopsportsinjuries.org