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Viscosupplementation injections augmented with corticosteroid for knee osteoarthritis: patient expectations and clinical outcomes

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OBJECTIVES: The use of intraarticular viscosupplementation has gained wide acceptance; however, clinical outcomes reports have been variable. The purpose of this prospective cohort study was to document patient expectations and outcomes following treatment with Hylan G-F 20 injection in a series of three injections in which corticosteroid was used with the initial injection.

METHODS: Patients with forty-seven knees (42-80 years of age) with a diagnosis of knee osteoarthritis completed a self-administered questionnaire before the injection series, and at 3, 6, 12 weeks and 6 months after the final (third) injection. The questionnaire included WOMAC score, Lysholm score, SF-12, and a patient satisfaction with outcomes question (10-point scale; 0=unsatisfied, 10=highly satisfied). Prior to the injections, patients also completed a validated expectation questionnaire and activity level questions. Patients were excluded if they had undergone surgery within the past 6 months.

RESULTS: The most important expectations for patients in this group were to have confidence in their knee, avoid future degeneration of their knee, and improve ability to maintain general health. There were no adverse events related to the viscosupplementation injections. Patients' WOMAC pain subscale improved from pre-injection to 6 months post injection ($p=0.003$) as did the overall WOMAC score ($p=0.038$). Function, measured by Lysholm score, significantly increased from pre-injection to post-injection (40 to 62, $p=0.001$). SF-12 physical component score also was significantly improved.

CONCLUSIONS: Our results showed significant improvement in pain relief and function following the viscosupplementation injection series. These improvements were maintained at 6 months. A combination of Hylan G-F 20 and corticosteroid was a safe and effective treatment option in this population of older patients suffering from osteoarthritis who desired to return to an active lifestyle while avoiding surgical treatment.

