Commentary to "The Burden of Craft in Arthroscopic Rotator Cuff Repair: Where We Have Been and Where We Are Going"

Am J Orthop. 2015 July;44(7):358
Authors:
McCann PD
Author Affiliation | Disclosures

Peter D. McCann

Download pdf

"The Burden of Craft in Arthroscopic Rotator Cuff Repair" is a summary of the annual Neer Lecture that was delivered by Stephen S. Burkhart, MD, at the 2014 annual meeting of American Shoulder and Elbow Surgeons. It is a fascinating personal story of the 35-year evolution of arthroscopic rotator cuff surgery presented by one of the most respected arthroscopic innovators of our times. I especially enjoyed his apt citations of classic leaders—Churchill and Gandhi—but 3 points I believe deserve special comment.

First, Steve describes the challenges he faced bringing new products to market in the 1980s. How do we resolve the inherent conflict between innovation that introduces new technology and the "tried and true" standards of established practice? Do the hard work that Steve has done over the years: pose a hypothesis, design a study to answer the question, publish results in peer-reviewed journals, and embrace the techniques that demonstrate better outcomes for patients.

My second point relates to surgeon–device industry relationships, a subject of great interest to The American Journal of Orthopedics dating back to 2006.1-3 Dr. Burkhart learned early on that he could not fashion new arthroscopic instruments in his garage. Nor could a company develop useful instruments without a knowledgeable surgeon’s input. Hence, a partnership between the innovator-surgeon and the device industry is essential to bring new and effective "tools" to market. Dr. Burkhart’s partnership with Arthrex has benefited many thousands of patients.

The agreements announced in 2007 between the US Department of Justice and 5 orthopedic device manufacturers (interestingly, current presidential candidate and Governor of New Jersey Chris Christie was the lead US Attorney on the case!) dramatically altered the surgeon–industry interaction and established strict guidelines that governed these relationships.4 These were needed reforms. However, the changes did not preclude an entrepreneurial surgeon with great ideas and a device manufacturer from profiting from excellent products that advanced patient care, provided, quoting from my editorial of 2006, “that these partnerships comply with legal and ethical standards” and are transparent as well as fully disclosed.5

Finally, Steve’s last point focuses on the “burden of craft,” a topic dear to all orthopedic surgeons and our professional societies. All of us are committed to improving our surgical skills and, as a profession, we are consistently engaged in learning from our talented colleagues, who are only too willing to share their expertise. The burden of craft requires eager students and dedicated teachers, all committed to the same goal—better outcomes for our patients. We are indeed fortunate that, as orthopedic surgeons, we fundamentally support a
culture of continued learning.

I thank Steve for his eloquent paper on this important principle.

References


Top Articles

- **Knee // Arthroplasty**
  
  Unicondylar Knee Arthroplasty in the U.S. Patient Population: Prevalence and Epidemiology

- **Knee // Shoulder & Elbow // Hip // Spine // Foot & Ankle // Hand & Wrist**
  
  Fragility Fractures: Diagnosis and Treatment

- **Shoulder & Elbow**
  
  The Characteristics of Surgeons Performing Total Shoulder Arthroplasty: Volume Consistency, Training, and Specialization

- **Shoulder & Elbow**
  
  Massive Rotator Cuff Tears in Patients Older Than Sixty-five: Indications for Cuff Repair versus Reverse Total Shoulder Arthroplasty

- **Knee**
Patellofemoral Instability in the Skeletally Immature Patient: A Review and Technical Description of Medial Patellofemoral Ligament Reconstruction in Patients with Open Physes

- **Knee // Arthroplasty**

Unicondylar Knee Arthroplasty in the U.S. Patient Population: Prevalence and Epidemiology

- **Knee // Shoulder & Elbow // Hip // Spine // Foot & Ankle // Hand & Wrist**

Fragility Fractures: Diagnosis and Treatment

- **Shoulder & Elbow**

The Characteristics of Surgeons Performing Total Shoulder Arthroplasty: Volume Consistency, Training, and Specialization

- **Shoulder & Elbow**

Massive Rotator Cuff Tears in Patients Older Than Sixty-five: Indications for Cuff Repair versus Reverse Total Shoulder Arthroplasty

- **Knee**

Patellofemoral Instability in the Skeletally Immature Patient: A Review and Technical Description of Medial Patellofemoral Ligament Reconstruction in Patients with Open Physes

- **Commentary**

Editorial Board Biographies

- **Practice Management // Education Center**

Update on Internet-Based Orthopedic Registries

- **STRATAFIX™ Symmetric PDS™ Plus Knotless Tissue Control Device**
- **STRATAFIX™ Spiral Knotless Tissue Control Device**
- **BioComposite SwiveLock Anchor**
- **BioComposite SwiveLock C, with White/Black TigerTape™ Loop**