

PHYSICAL THERAPY A GREAT FIRST CHOICE



New Study Shows
Physical Therapy is just
as Effective
as surgery for Meniscal Tear &
Knee Osteoarthritis



Researchers at 7 major universities and orthopedic surgery centers around the country studied 351 patients aged 45 years or older who had a meniscal tear and mild-to-moderate osteoarthritis (OA) of the knee.

Patients were randomly assigned to groups who received either surgery and postoperative physical therapy or standardized physical therapy. Within 6-12 months, patients who had physical therapy alone showed similar improvement in functional status and pain as those who had undergone arthroscopic partial meniscectomy surgery.^{1,2}

The Meniscal Tear in Osteoarthritis Research (METEOR) trial, widely publicized after appearing in New England Journal of Medicine (NEJM), showed no significant differences in functional improvement after 6-12 months between patients who underwent surgery with postoperative physical therapy and those who received standardized physical therapy alone.^{1,3}

Patients who were given standardized physical therapy—individualized treatment and a progressive home exercise program—had the option of “crossing over” to surgery if substantial improvements were not achieved. Thirty percent of patients crossed over to surgery during the first 6 months. At 12 months these patients reported similar outcomes as those who initially had surgery. Seventy percent of patients remained with standardized physical therapy.^{1,2}

Surgery costs about \$5,000, compared with \$1,000 to \$2,000 for a typical course of physical therapy.⁴

Benefits of PT

- Decreased healthcare costs
- Decreased risk of future medical intervention i.e. surgery, medication
- Favorable results

¹Surgery versus Physical Therapy for a Meniscal Tear and Osteoarthritis, Jeffrey N. Katz, M.D., Robert H. Brophy, M.D., Christine E. Chaisson, M.P.H., Leigh de Chaves, P.T., O.C.S., Brian J. Cole, M.D., M.B.A., Diane L. Dahm, M.D., Laurel A. Donnell-Fink, M.P.H., Ali Guermazi, M.D., Ph.D., Amanda K. Haas, M.A., Morgan H. Jones, M.D., M.P.H., Bruce A. Levy, M.D., Lisa A. Mandl, M.D., M.P.H., Scott D. Martin, M.D., Robert G. Marx, M.D., Anthony Miniaci, M.D., Matthew J. Matava, M.D., Joseph Palmisano, M.P.H., Emily K. Reinke, Ph.D., Brian E. Richardson, P.T., M.S., S.C.S., C.S.C.S., Benjamin N. Rome, B.A., Clare E. Safran-Norton, P.T., Ph.D., O.C.S., Debra J. Skoniecki, M.S.N., A.N.P., Daniel H. Solomon, M.D., M.P.H., Matthew V. Smith, M.D., Kurt P. Spindler, M.D., Michael J. Stuart, M.D., John Wright, M.D., Rick W. Wright, M.D., and Elena Losina, Ph.D., March 19, 2013 DOI: 10.1056/NEJ-Moa1301408

²Study Finds Physical Therapy Just as Effective as Surgery in Patients With A Torn Meniscus And Arthritis Of The Knee, APTA News Release, March 20, 2013.

³Physical Therapy 'Good First Choice' for Meniscal Tear and Knee OA, PT In Motion News Now, March 22, 2013.

⁴Torn meniscus treatments: Physical therapy just as good as surgery, says study, CBSNews.com, March 19, 2013.

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PHYSICAL THERAPY A GREAT FIRST CHOICE

PT Can Help Your Patients

- Our therapists are specially trained in the mechanical diagnosis of all musculoskeletal problems.
- Immediately engage patients in exercises and activities they can do at home to improve their condition; provide education and empowerment in managing and preventing recurrence of the problem.
- Early intervention for injuries and conditions such as arthritis, has proven vital in preventing further problems, (i.e. falls and fractures) and returning patients to function more quickly.

PT is Cost-effective

- Help evaluate whether additional testing (i.e. MRI's, CT scans) are necessary.
- Some insurers require the conservative management provided by physical therapy prior to approving additional testing.
- Help determine if the patient is a surgical candidate and if specialist referral should be made (some patients have very high specialists co-pays).
- Help get the patient back to work sooner.

CASE STUDY

RIGHT KNEE SURGERY; LEFT KNEE PHYSICAL THERAPY (PT)

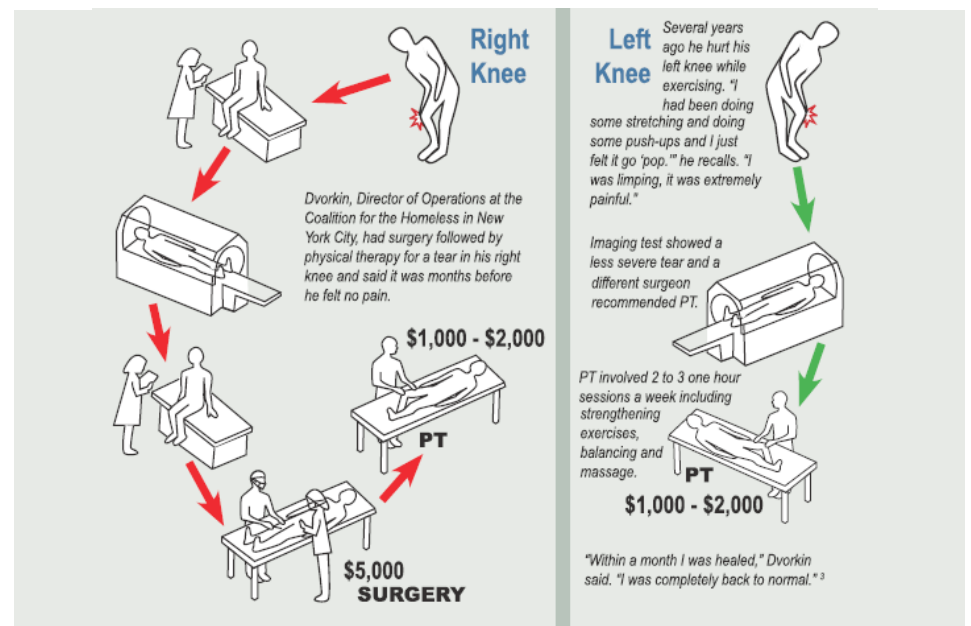
Robert Dvorkin, 56, had both treatments for injuries on each knee several years apart.

RIGHT KNEE

- Tear in right knee
- Surgery followed by PT
- Months passed prior to being out of pain

LEFT KNEE

- Painful but less severe tear
- Surgeon recommended PT
- Healed and back to normal within 1 month



When to Refer to PT:

Usually, the sooner the better.

- If the patient has not improved significantly by the first week follow-up visit with just medication, PT can help.
- Early therapy intervention results in a shorter duration of care a quicker return to function.