

## **Patient's Perceptions and Utilization of Physical Therapy after Orthopaedic Surgery**

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**INTRODUCTION:** Formal Physical Therapy (PT) traditionally has been a critical part of postoperative recovery after orthopaedic surgery but due to recent cost containment efforts in health care and bundle payments, the coverage for formal PT has become limited with high copays. As access to physical therapy is threatened, alternatives to formal PT have been proposed, including telerehabilitation, internet-based PT, and even home-based physician-guided PT. The purpose of this study was to understand patient perceptions of PT, the benefits, perception of improvements, access to PT, and alternative forms of PT after shoulder surgery.

**METHODS:** An anonymous survey study querying 80 shoulder patients at a single orthopaedic surgery center was performed. Patient information was collected, including demographics, access to PT, number of PT sessions, insurance, copayment, patients' perceptions of improvement, and their opinion about internet-based PT (IBPT). Answers were collected digitally using Likert-scale or multiple-choice questions. Descriptive statistics were used to report survey data. Analyses were performed based on demographic variables using independent t-test, chi-square tests, and an analysis of variance (ANOVA).

**RESULTS:** Patients attended an average of  $16 \pm 13.8$  PT sessions with a perceived  $65\% \pm 32$  improvement attributed to their sessions. The average copay was  $\$18 \pm 20.8$  per session which 56.14% agreed or strongly agreed that it was reasonable. Sixty-five percent of patients perceived improvement in their condition attributable to their physical therapy sessions and 94.8% of patients agreed or strongly agreed their therapist took the time to educate them. When asked about internet-based PT (IBPT), 52.5% disagreed that successful PT could be achieved by IBPT. There were also 68.6% of patients who responded that they would not consider using IBPT even after a few in-person sessions.

**DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION:** After undergoing orthopaedic shoulder surgery, patients believe that their therapist, the number of sessions, and the usefulness of physical therapy have all contributed positively to their recovery. Surprisingly copayments for PT were as high as \$40, but majority of patients felt this cost was reasonable. As cost containment continues to be a priority, internet-based physical therapy may become a better viable alternative. However, it will require close integration and engagement with a physical therapist, as patients still perceive in-person formal physical therapy to have a significant impact.