

Internet Promotion of Orthobiologic Therapies by Members of the American Association of Hip and Knee Surgeons (AAHKS): Content Analysis of Surgeon Websites Versus Current Evidence

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INTRODUCTION: Orthobiologic therapies such as platelet-rich plasma (PRP), bone marrow aspirate concentrate (BMAC), and hyaluronic acid (HA) are increasingly marketed for musculoskeletal conditions despite inconclusive evidence regarding their clinical efficacy. This study evaluated the prevalence and nature of orthobiologic promotion on websites associated with members of the American Association of Hip and Knee Surgeons (AAHKS), and compared these claims to current peer-reviewed evidence.

METHODS: An internet search was conducted to identify orthopedic surgeon-promotional websites for each member of the AAHKS using the members' full name and a previously published set of criteria. Each of these websites was then evaluated for mentions of orthobiologics services, claims of benefits, and discussion of risks.

RESULTS: Among 4683 eligible websites, 575 (12.3%) referenced orthobiologic therapies. The most mentioned orthobiologic was PRP, which was found on over half of the websites, followed by HA and stem cell-based injections. Claimed benefits included pain reduction (6.0%), enhanced healing (4.2%), and decreased inflammation (3.1%). In contrast, risks such as injection site pain, local infection, and immune reaction, appeared on only 2.7%, 1.9%, and 1.2% of websites, respectively.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION: AAHKS member websites commonly promote orthobiologic treatments with favorable claims that outpace the current scientific evidence, while rarely disclosing risks and limitations associated with these treatment modalities. These findings highlight a gap between online marketing and scientific consensus, underscoring the need for more balanced, evidence-based patient education. Professional societies should consider establishing guidelines to ensure responsible public communication about emerging biologic therapies.