

Physical Therapy Management for Posterior Dislocation of the Shoulder as a Result of Electrical Shock: A Case Study

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Abstract

Background and Purpose: Posterior dislocation of the shoulder is a rarity, representing 1-2% of all dislocations. As a result, literature is sparse regarding conservative treatment, let alone rehabilitation of this instability. The purpose of this case study is to describe an approach to clinical management consisting of posture education, body mechanics instruction, therapeutic exercise, and occupation-specific functional training.

Methods: A 27 year old male sustained a posterior dislocation of his non-dominant left shoulder as a result of electrical shock. Plain films and MRI demonstrated a Reverse Hill-Sachs lesion. Physical therapy was initiated 3 weeks post-injury. The physical therapy treatment intervention initially consisted of therapeutic exercise, specifically isometric strengthening in positions of optimal glenohumeral joint stability. Outcome measures included the DASH questionnaire; grip strength measured through hand-held dynamometry at baseline, during and after treatment; manual muscle test through modified isometric testing in the position of glenohumeral joint stability (same examiner); and patient self-report comparing current level of function to pre-injury.

Results: Results demonstrated a decrease in DASH score, indicative of a favorable outcome; increase in shoulder strength at discharge and 4 month follow-up; and increased level of function through patient report. Grip strength was not a reliable indication of the patient's progress.

Conclusion: Conservative management consisting of posture education, improved body mechanics, therapeutic exercise, and specific occupational function training has demonstrated positive outcomes as represented by this single-case study; however, additional study is recommended.

Key Words: physical therapy, posterior shoulder dislocation, instability, exercise