

III.INTRODUCTION

Overview

This clinical practice guideline is based on a systematic review of published studies with regard to the diagnosis and treatment of carpal tunnel syndrome (CTS). In addition to providing practice recommendations, this guideline also highlights limitations in the literature and areas that require future research.

This guideline is intended to be used by all qualified and appropriately trained physicians and surgeons involved in the diagnosis and treatment of CTS. It is also intended to serve as an information resource for decision makers and developers of practice guidelines and recommendations.

The following definition of carpal tunnel syndrome has been added to the introduction section: “For the purpose of this guideline, Carpal Tunnel Syndrome (CTS) is defined as follows: Carpal Tunnel Syndrome is a symptomatic compression neuropathy of the median nerve at the level of the wrist, characterized physiologically by evidence of increased pressure within the carpal tunnel and decreased function of the nerve at that level. Carpal Tunnel Syndrome can be caused by many different diseases, conditions and events. It is characterized by patients as producing numbness, tingling, hand and arm pain and muscle dysfunction. The disorder is not restricted by age, gender, ethnicity, or occupation and is associated with or caused by systemic disease and local mechanical and disease factors.

Goals and Rationale

The purpose of this clinical practice guideline is to help improve treatment based on the current best evidence. Current evidence-based medicine (EBM) standards demand that physicians use the best available evidence in their clinical decision making. To assist them, this clinical practice guideline consists of a systematic review of the available literature regarding the diagnosis and treatment of CTS. The systematic review detailed herein was conducted between February 2013 and February 2015 and demonstrates where there is good evidence, where evidence is lacking, and what topics future research must target in order to improve the diagnosis and treatment of CTS. AAOS staff and the physician work group systematically reviewed the available literature and subsequently wrote the following recommendations based on a rigorous, standardized process.

Musculoskeletal care is provided in many different settings by many different providers. We created this guideline as an educational tool to guide qualified physicians through a series of treatment decisions in an effort to improve the quality and efficiency of care. This guideline should not be construed as including all proper methods of care or excluding methods of care reasonably directed to obtaining the same results. The ultimate judgment regarding any specific procedure or treatment must be made in light of all circumstances presented by the patient and the needs and resources particular to the locality or institution.

Intended Users

This guideline is intended to be used by orthopaedic surgeons and physicians managing carpal tunnel syndrome. Typically, orthopaedic surgeons will have completed medical training, a qualified residency in orthopaedic surgery, and some may have completed additional sub-