

3T MRI can detect wrist ligament tears, possibly eliminating need for invasive arthroscopy

January 6 2009

MRI of the wrist at 3T is an effective way to detect wrist ligament tears and in some cases can avoid unnecessary surgery, according to a study performed at Neuroskeletal Imaging in Merritt Island, Florida.

The study included 49 patients who had both 3T MR and arthroscopy; 51 tears were found on arthroscopy. 41 of the 51 tears were also found using 3T MRI. "The resolution with 3T MRI is good. We are able to see the small ligaments a lot better and determine whether or not they are torn," said Thomas Magee, MD, lead author of the study.

"3T MRI is beneficial to both the patient and the physician. If there is a problem, it provides a road map for the physician to use during surgery and eliminates any type of surgery for those who have normal findings," said Dr. Magee. "We are able to see bone bruises, cysts and other things that may be pain generators instead of ligament tears," he said.

"Ligament tears are very common in people over the age of 40. Approximately 40% of all people over age 40 have some type of ligament tear," said Dr. Magee. "Trauma, wear and tear and degeneration can cause tearing of the ligaments," he said.

"If surgery is being contemplated, I advise people to have an MR scan to determine the cause of pain before arthroscopy," said Dr. Magee.

Source: American Roentgen Ray Society

Citation: 3T MRI can detect wrist ligament tears, possibly eliminating need for invasive arthroscopy (2009, January 6) retrieved 20 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2009-01-3t-mri-wrist-ligament-possibly.html>

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