

Key Questions

Knee Arthroscopy

Osteoarthritis is a chronic and painful joint disease caused by degeneration that affects more than 20 million people, the most common joint disease in the United States. Knee osteoarthritis causes thinning and softening of the cartilage in the knee that absorbs shock and allows joint surfaces to glide over one another. Arthroscopic knee surgery in patients with osteoarthritis associated knee pain is performed to visualize the knee joint, remove excess fluids and worn or loose bodies. Despite approximately 1 million arthroscopic knee surgeries performed annually in the US, important clinical questions have not been answered about the effectiveness of the intervention and there is wide variation in its use.

Key questions:

1. What is the evidence that arthroscopic lavage reduces pain and improves function?
2. What is the evidence that arthroscopic debridement reduces pain and improves function?
3. What is the evidence that either debridement or lavage reduces pain and improves function for any sub-population of patients with osteoarthritis?
4. What is the evidence regarding adverse events from arthroscopic debridement and lavage?
5. What is the evidence regarding cost or cost-effectiveness of arthroscopic lavage or debridement?