

Orthopaedic Connection

The Orthopaedic Surgery 1/3 Rule

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There is a banner on the home page of my website www.orthopodsurgeon.com that states "An educated patient is our best result". What I am trying to do within the context of the Gratiot County Herald Health page is to make Gratiot County Herald readers the most knowledgeable group anywhere regarding Orthopaedic and musculoskeletal topics. I refer to things on occasion as a class because that's how I think about what we together are doing. I have pointed out already that I will as far as possible try to link topics together to give continuity to a particular subject as we have done for the shoulder. You will get more out of the course that way. The good news is there are no quizzes or tests (because I know you will remember everything!). The bad news is there will be no summer vacation or holiday breaks (not a pun) in the course.

Now, on to the 1/3 rule. I referred to it two weeks ago in discussing things torn in the shoulder.

The Rule applies to patients who have Orthopaedic Surgery. It is my own rule, which I discovered in my experience, but I don't claim it as an original idea.

Let me explain. We were discussing the rotator cuff two weeks ago when the subject came up.

I like to divide recovery after shoulder surgery (or almost anything I do) into thirds.

The initial 1/3 of the person recovering is begun at the time of surgery. Each case is unique and has to be dealt with individually, but if I feel that I was able to do in surgery what I had hoped and planned to do we are off to a good start. I like to think about this as 1/3 of the patient's recovery. I find that most patients and families think 95 - 100% of it is the surgery. Nothing could be further from the truth!

The middle 1/3 is what the patient needs to do at our direction to get better. It has to do with following directions faithfully about certain do's and don'ts. Personal exercises at home and occasionally physical therapy are a big part of the do's. A compliant patient is a joy.

The last 1/3 is nature's ultimate healing that neither the patient nor I have any control over. I have explained often that what I do is a

lot like gardening. You can plow, plant, fertilize, water, weed etc. but you can't make it grow (heal). Nature does that.

Usually things heal, but not always. That's why you can't guarantee any surgical treatment.

We help, patient cooperates, nature heals.

This last 1/3 has everything to do with the quality of the patient's bone and tissue that we have to work with. Brittle bone or very damaged tissues make it extremely hard to get an adequate repair. Healing can also be very slow and incomplete in some cases.

It is up to me to explain to the patient and family how things went and what kind of bone and tissues we had to work with.

From this I hope you see things a bit more clearly about how healing does occur.

Much more information is available by logging onto our office teaching website www.orthopodsurgeon.com. The website, which can lead you into Your Orthopaedic Connection has tons of great information.

Our goal is simple. To help people return to more pain free, functional lives.

Be Well.

Dr. Haverbush