

Orthopaedic Connection

Hip Pain. Arthritis? Maybe Not.

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Transforming patient information into patient understanding.

I have noticed my patients tend to call everything from the buttocks, all the way to the groin area - arthritis.

Arthritis to me as an Orthopaedic Surgeon is a very specific condition. Did you ever stop to think that arthritis may be getting a bum rap because patients usually attribute almost everything that hurts to arthritis?

Not a day passes that I don't hear a patient say, "I'm just full of arthritis."

Well, they may hurt all over, but it is not all due to arthritis.

The Source

Everything I do in Orthopaedic Surgery in trying to help my patients is based on correctly diagnosing the source of the problem.

Lots of patients are treated by their doctor for the pain they are having. This is fine, but if you are to really help the patient, the source must be identified as closely as possible.

I have a saying I often use which is "There is no law against having two (or more) problems." This makes diagnosis even more difficult and confusing.

The Big Three

I suggest it's not wise for you to be trying to figure out the source of the pain. That's where I come in.

Three very different conditions cause 90% of problems around the hip. They are:

- Lumbar spine problems, i.e. arthritis, disc trouble, pinched nerve
- Trochanteric bursitis/tendinitis
- Arthritis of the hip joint.

Lumbar Spine

Symptoms from a "bad back" frequently stay in the lower back area and upper buttocks. My patients often refer to their buttock area as "the hip".

Patients with a "bad back" usually have:

- Worn out discs (narrowing of disc space)
- Spurs (arthritis changes)
- Bulging disc(s) which may pinch a nerve.

Here is the key. If the back changes are higher up in the lumbar spine, pain can be referred to the groin and upper thigh. Lower lumbar problems can refer pain to the buttock and back of the thigh.

Sciatica is its own unique problem caused by a disc bulge pinching a nerve and leading to severe pain in the buttock and passing all the way to the foot.

Hey, this whole mess is confusing even for my referring doctors so how are you going to figure it out?

Hmm. So much more to cover. So little time (space actually!). I really don't like to have to do part twos, but it is needed at times. Please try to come back for the conclusion and lots more good information.

Office Website and Gratiot County Herald Archive

www.orthopodsurgeon.com and Your Orthopaedic Connection provide all the Orthopaedic and musculoskeletal information you need! And you can reach the archive of all Gratiot County Herald previous articles which I have written through the office website.

All past articles are listed by title and the complete text is available at the click of a mouse.

All of the information available concerns what I treat daily in the office and hospital. Please log on and check it out.

I very much appreciate all of you loyal readers, patients and future patients.

Our goal is simple - To help people return to more pain free, functional lives. I specialize in you.

Good health. Good life. All the best to you.

Be well.

Dr. Haverbush