WHAT IS ORTHOPAEDIC CARE?

Orthopaedic surgeons are physicians concerned with the diagnosis, care, and treatment of bone and joint health, known as musculoskeletal disorders. These include injuries to the bones, joints, muscles, ligaments, or tendons and conditions such as arthritis or osteoporosis.¹

BONE AND JOINT HEALTH PROBLEMS IMPACT MILLIONS

Musculoskeletal disorders and diseases are the leading cause of disability in the United States and account for more than half of all chronic conditions in people older than 50. Close to 7 million bones are broken annually; many occur in men younger than 45 and women older than 45, resulting in 14 million visits to emergency rooms or medical facilities. The costs of these visits add up to roughly $21 billion a year.²

More than one in four Americans has a musculoskeletal impairment, with back and knee injuries the most prevalent.³ An estimated 89.7 million individuals annually reported musculoskeletal disease as their primary health concern between 2004 and 2006.⁴ A federal analysis of data from emergency departments in 23 states found that sprains and strains were the leading reason for adult visits, accounting for 6 percent (2.3 million) of all adult visits in 2005.⁵

Back Problems: About 25.8 million visits were made to physicians’ offices due to primary back problems and there were more than 653,000 inpatient stays at U.S. hospitals in 2009 – principally for back surgery or other back disorder treatments.⁶ ⁷

Knee Problems: About 14.5 million visits were made to physicians’ offices due to primary knee problems and about 621,000 knee replacements were performed in 2009 in the United States.⁸ ⁹ Elderly patients experience a lower risk of mortality and congestive heart failure due to knee replacement surgery, according to a recent study.¹⁰

Shoulder Problems: Almost 9.7 million visits were made to physicians’ offices due to primary shoulder problems and about 33,000 people had total shoulder replacement in 2009.¹¹ ¹²

Hip Problems: More than 5.1 million visits were made to physicians’ offices due to primary hip problems and about 285,000 total hip replacements were performed in 2009.¹³ ¹⁴ These patients demonstrate significantly increased life expectancy according to a control group study.¹⁵

Arthritis: As the most common cause of disability in adults, it is a leading cause of work limitations. Osteoarthritis, known as degenerative joint disease, is the most common.¹⁶ Approximately 22 percent of adults in the U.S. suffer from arthritis and joint pain, leading to $281.5 billion in direct medical care expenditures and $54.3 billion in lost productivity in 2004.¹⁷

Young athletes: Youth (ages 14 and under) account for roughly 3.5 million medical visits for sports injuries annually. About 15 percent of basketball players, 28 percent of football players, 22 percent of soccer players, 25 percent of baseball players and 12 percent of softball players (ages 5 – 14) have been injured while playing their respective sports.¹⁸
AN INCREASING DEMAND FOR ORTHOPAEDIC SPECIALISTS

By 2016, the United States is likely to experience a significant shortage of orthopaedic surgeons able to do total hip- and knee-joint-replacement surgeries. The shortfall of orthopaedic hip and knee surgeons is expected to be so drastic by 2016 that 72 percent of those who need total knee replacements and 50 percent of those who need total hip replacements will not have access to them.19

The value of orthopaedic care can be measured by the millions of patients who are able to return to work, independent living, or other activities because of their orthopaedic treatment.

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