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A Cross-Cultural Comparison of Standards of Care for Anterior Cruciate Ligament (ACL) Injury

Background: Statistics show that there is on average about 200,000 ACL tears annually in the United States and about 60,000 to 75,000 of the people with an ACL tear will experience a reconstruction surgery (Gammons, 2010). Some evidence exists showing improved outcomes utilizing eastern medical traditions. The purpose of this study was to compare and contrast standards of care (SOC) for ACL injury between the Western and Eastern traditions utilizing examples from the United States and Thailand.

Methods: This project used a qualitative approach from the perspective of descriptive phenomenology to identify central tenants of Western and Eastern approaches to care for ACL injuries. For this project, the interview was guided by a predetermined set of open-ended questions, varying for different fields of participants. Findings: In the United States, ACL injuries are more common than in Thailand. Also, because the United States does not follow eastern traditions such as sitting in a cross-legged position throughout the day, practice yoga, meditation, or Thai-Chi like exercises frequently, Americans thus are exposed to more knee injuries. Thailand and the United States follow very close procedures to healing an ACL injury, however there are more traditional Thai methods and remedies that can be used on patients such as Thai massage and herbal ball treatments. Implications: Although Thailand does offer alternative approaches to healing, Thailand is greatly Western influenced in terms of treating an ACL injury. Due to the amount of doctors trained under Western schooling, the United States and Thailand share close methods of care for an ACL injury. It is not extremely common in either Thailand or the United States to use holistic approaches to heal ACL injuries; it is mainly dependent on the patients want and/or belief in the traditional/complimentary practices.