

## Family Medicine Clerkship - Plain Language Summary Template

**Title:** Using Ultrasound to View Your Rotator Cuff.

**Name:** Kent Scheff, MS3

### **Plain Language Summary:**

#### What is the rotator cuff?

Hurting your shoulder is very common. One of the most common injuries to your shoulder is injury to the “rotator cuff”. The shoulder joint is made up of the upper arm bone and the shoulder blade. The rotator cuff is 4 muscles that are attached to both the shoulder blade and the end of your upper arm bone where it meets the shoulder blade. These muscles help to move your upper arm. When you have a tear in your rotator cuff you may have pain when you move your shoulder or sleep on it. You may have tenderness or weakness in the shoulder. You may also notice you cannot move the shoulder as much as you normally could.

#### How does an ultrasound work?

Ultrasound uses sound waves to create images much like a ship uses sonar to create an image. The ultrasound machine will send sound waves into your body and some will bounce back towards the machine. When these waves bounce back they are called “echoes”. These echoes can identify distance, size, and shape of objects inside the body. It creates an image because the sound waves travel differently through each thing in the body, such as muscle, fluid or bone.

#### Benefits of Ultrasound

It is safe. There are no known harmful effects of ultrasound.

Ultrasound is low cost and easy to use.

Ultrasound is noninvasive.

There is no pain when you have this done.

Can view movement and actual function of the muscle and tendon.

It does not use radiation, so you can have ultrasound while pregnant.

It does not use a magnet, so you can have it if you have metal in your body.

#### What happens when I have an Ultrasound of my shoulder?

You will be asked to put on a gown. They will ask you to remove one arm from the gown to show the skin of your shoulder. You will be asked to place the back of your hand on the table behind your butt. This position helps the doctor see the rotator cuff. Next, they will put gel on your shoulder. The gel helps the sound waves move and make a better picture. They will put a tool “called a transducer” that sends and receives the sound waves onto your shoulder. They will move this around until they get the view they want on the screen of the machine. You may be asked to move your arm so they can see the muscles and tendon move. If you want, you can have the doctor point and describe what they are seeing on the screen.

#### What happens next?

You should talk with your doctor about what the ultrasound showed and what your treatment options are.

## **Additional Resources:**

### **For more information:**

Mayo Clinic: Rotator Cuff Injury

<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/rotator-cuff-injury/DS00192>

Medline Plus Patient Education Tools for Rotator Cuff Injuries:

Text Summary:

<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/tutorials/rotatorcuffinjuries/htm/video.htm>

Interactive Tutorial: <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/tutorials/rotatorcuffinjuries/htm/lesson.htm>

Self Playing Tutorial: <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/tutorials/rotatorcuffinjuries/htm/video.htm>

### **Treatment Options:**

U.S. Department of Health & Human Services: Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality: Treatment Options for Rotator Cuff Tears: A Guide for Adults:

Document: [http://effectivehealthcare.ahrq.gov/ehc/products/67/545/rotatorcuff\\_consumer.pdf](http://effectivehealthcare.ahrq.gov/ehc/products/67/545/rotatorcuff_consumer.pdf)

Audio: [http://effectivehealthcare.ahrq.gov/ehc/products/67/545/ROTATOR\\_CUFF.mp3](http://effectivehealthcare.ahrq.gov/ehc/products/67/545/ROTATOR_CUFF.mp3)

### **Key Words:**

Rotator Cuff Tear

Ultrasound

Shoulder

This document was created by a medical student enrolled in the Family Medicine Clerkship at the University of Minnesota Medical School as part of the course project. The aim of the project is to present information on a medical topic in the format of a patient education handout. It does not necessarily reflect the views of the University of Minnesota Medical School physicians and faculty. These materials are provided for informational purposes only and are in no way intended to take the place of the advice and recommendations of your personal health care provider. The information provided may no longer be up-to-date since it has not been reviewed since the date of creation. The information provided should not be used to diagnose a health problem or disease, or as a means of determining treatment. In the event of a medical emergency, immediately contact a doctor or call 911.