

Preface



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Guest Editor

Despite the frequency with which they occur and the many articles written about them, disorders of the Achilles tendon continue to be the subject of controversy. Even the terminology to describe conditions affecting the Achilles tendon is controversial; tendinopathy, tendinosis, tendinitis, tenosynovitis, peritendinitis, and achillodynia, among others, have all been used. The etiology, pathogenesis, and natural history of Achilles disorders remain largely unknown, and there are no definitive criteria to differentiate acute from chronic conditions. Although most acute Achilles tendon injuries occur in athletes involved in sports that require repetitive impact loading, such as jumping or running, approximately 25% of patients with Achilles tendon injuries have no history of athletic involvement, resulting in a diverse patient group requiring individualized treatment considerations. Recommendations for a variety of operative and nonoperative treatment methods often are based on empiric evidence rather than scientific data, and new treatment protocols are continually being developed. There are few prospective, randomized, controlled trials available for a comparison of the different treatments. All of these factors make the treatment of Achilles tendon disorders, ranging from chronic overuse tendinopathy to acute tendon rupture, a challenging problem for orthopedists.

Any discussion of the Achilles tendon should include the indications for and technique of lengthening of the tendon, especially in light of growing enthusiasm for Achilles lengthening for a variety of foot and ankle pathologies. For this comprehensive volume, an article on other posterior calf pathologies is included, because a diagnosis of Achilles pain frequently is, in fact, another problem.

In this issue of *Foot and Ankle Clinics of North America*, several foot and ankle and sports medicine specialists share their experience and expertise in managing these complex disorders and discuss indications, contraindications, techniques, and outcomes of a variety of operative and nonoperative treatment methods. It is hoped

that this information will help answer some of the questions about Achilles tendon disorders and serve as a basis for treatment decision making.

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