

419 – Shockwave Therapy

With Steven Bruce and James Woledge

Shockwave therapy has been used in the treatment of musculoskeletal conditions for over 20 years, with the first applications in the treatment of calcific tendinitis of the shoulder. The technology has continued to evolve, with the development of both radial and focused shockwave devices.

James Woledge is an expert in shockwave therapy with over 10 years of experience in the field. He has a multidisciplinary practice that includes physiotherapists, osteopaths, and sports therapists, and recently became a certified musculoskeletal sonographer, which has allowed him to better assess and treat tendinopathies using shockwave therapy and other interventions.

The discussion covered the following key topics:

- Updates on the latest research and debates around shockwave therapy, including studies on insertional Achilles tendinopathy and plantar fasciitis
- The conditions that have the strongest evidence for shockwave therapy, such as calcific tendinitis of the shoulder, tennis elbow, and gluteal tendinopathy
- The differences between radial and focused shockwave therapy, including how they are used for different types of tendinopathies
- Radial shockwave therapy is better for more superficial conditions, while focused shockwave is more effective for deeper, chronic tendinopathies.
- The role of diagnostic ultrasound in identifying the cause of a problem, and therefore the appropriate intervention.
- The increasing use of musculoskeletal sonography by practitioners to better assess and guide the treatment of tendinopathies
- Diagnostic ultrasound can be a valuable tool for assessing tendinopathies and guiding shockwave therapy, but the imaging findings don't always correlate with the patient's symptoms.
- Shockwave therapy should be used as part of a comprehensive treatment approach, along with exercises, education, and addressing any underlying metabolic or lifestyle factors.

- The need for careful patient selection and assessment, including the use of diagnostic ultrasound, to ensure the appropriate use of shockwave therapy
Emerging Trends
- James Woledge's background in becoming a certified musculoskeletal sonographer and how that has impacted his practice
- The practical and financial considerations around purchasing and using shockwave therapy equipment. There are financial and practical considerations around purchasing shockwave therapy equipment, but it can be a worthwhile investment for practitioners who treat a high volume of tendinopathy patients.
- The growing awareness and demand for shockwave therapy among patients, particularly for conditions like plantar fasciitis
- The potential for shockwave therapy to be used for a wider range of conditions, such as carpal tunnel syndrome and non-union fractures, although the evidence is still emerging
- There have been placebo-controlled trials on the use of shockwave therapy for conditions like insertional Achilles tendinopathy and plantar fasciitis, with mixed results
- NICE guidelines recommend the use of shockwave therapy for certain tendinopathies, such as calcific tendinitis of the shoulder

This discussion could have a significant impact on how practitioners approach the use of shockwave therapy in their clinical practice, as well as enabling those who do not use shockwave to advise their patients better on when it might be appropriate and how to select a suitable therapist.