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Avascular necrosis after a steroid injection

I read with interest the Clinical Vista Brief about bilateral hip avascular necrosis.¹ I note that the corticosteroid injection was given 8 months before the condition was diagnosed, but the patient had complained of hip pain for 13 months. Cortisone injections (particularly bursa and tendon sheath infiltrations) are extremely common treatments in primary care, but avascular necrosis is rarely seen. Although one always has to be careful when using steroid infiltrations, they are usually quite safe. In this particular case, the connection between the cortisone injection and the development of avascular necrosis is not clear, given the chronology of events.

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REFERENCE

1. Gunal I, Karatosun V. Avascular necrosis of the femoral heads after single corticosteroid injection. *CMAJ* 2006;175(1):31.

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[The authors respond:]

We thank Pierre Juéry for his interest in our report on avascular necrosis of the femoral heads.¹ We would like to clarify the chronology of events: the patient's symptoms appeared 8 months after the corticosteroid injection; the MRI scan was done 5 months after the onset of the symptoms or in other words 13 months after the corticosteroid injection. Because the time to symptom onset fits with other reports in the literature, and we excluded all other known causes of avascular necrosis of the

hip, it is our opinion that all patients should be warned about the risk associated with even a low dose of corticosteroids.

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1. Gunal I, Karatosun V. Avascular necrosis of the femoral heads after single corticosteroid injection. *CMAJ* 2006;175(1):31.

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