

In patients showing improved function after a rehabilitation program for cervical disorders, their functional score at discharge is influenced by age, symptom duration, and inclusion of mobilization or manipulation treatments, says an article in the January issue of *Archives of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation* (Vol 89, No 1). William G Boissonnault, PT, DHSc, FAAOMPT, and Mary Beth Badke, PT, PhD, were coauthors of this study.

The objectives of this study were to assess the influence of symptom acuity on functional outcomes, pain, and patient perception of recovery after a physical therapy program for cervical disorders and to determine what variables are associated with patient function at discharge.

Participants were 220 patients who were seen for physical therapy between June 2003 and November 2005 at a tertiary care facility. A customized rehabilitation program was developed for each patient based on examination findings and included a combination of the following interventions: mobilization or manipulation, flexibility exercises, strengthening exercises, endurance exercises, massage techniques, and heat and cold modalities. Main outcome measures used were functional improvement, perceived pain, and perceived improvement scores in the Care Connections Outcomes System (formerly TAOS) database.

Patients whose symptom duration was greater than 6 months (chronic group) had significantly less functional improvement than those whose symptom duration was less than 1 month (acute group). The median percentage improvement score for patient-perceived recovery also was significantly lower for the chronic group than for the acute group. There was no significant difference in the percentage decrease in pain among the acute, sub-acute (symptom duration, 1-6 months), and chronic groups. In regression analyses, a model with age, symptom duration, and inclusion of mobilization and manipulation interventions fit the data well and explained 35.6% of the variance in functional outcome score for all 3 groups combined.