Hardware removal: indications and expectations


Abstract: Although hardware removal is commonly done, it should not be considered a routine procedure. The decision to remove hardware has significant economic implications, including the costs of the procedure as well as possible work time lost for postoperative recovery. The clinical indications for implant removal are not well established. There are few definitive data to guide whether implant removal is appropriate. Implant removal may be challenging and lead to complications, such as neurovascular injury, refracture, or recurrence of deformity. When implants are removed for pain relief alone, the results are unpredictable and depend on both the implant type and its anatomic location. Current literature does not support the routine removal of implants to protect against allergy, carcinogenesis, or metal detection. Surgeons and patients should be aware of appropriate indications and have realistic expectations of the risks and benefits of implant removal.