Nontraumatic osteonecrosis of the humeral head

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Abstract: The humeral head is the second most common site for nontraumatic osteonecrosis after the femoral head, yet it has attracted relatively little attention. Osteonecrosis is associated with many conditions, such as corticosteroid use, sickle-cell disease, alcoholism, dysbarism (or caisson disease), Gaucher's disease, and other systemic conditions. The diagnosis is a clinical and radiographic one, the latter forming the basis for its staging. Treatment depends on the chronicity and severity of symptoms, as well as the degree of clinical and radiographic progression. Surgical treatment includes arthroscopic debridement and core decompression for early osteonecrosis and hemiarthroplasty or total shoulder arthroplasty for more advanced disease. This report reviews osteonecrosis of the humeral head, with an emphasis on current treatment options.