Editorial Commentary: Lesions of the Superior Labrum From Anterior to Posterior (SLAP) Are a Slap in the Face to the Traditional Trinity of History, Examination, and Imaging

Abstract: Superior labrum from anterior to posterior (SLAP) lesions are a slap in the face to the revered trinity of history, physical examination, and imaging. SLAP lesions are difficult to diagnose, and arthroscopy is not only the gold standard, but the current method on which expert arthroscopic shoulder subspecialists rely.

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Ben Kibler is one of our highest impact authors.1-5 In “Current practice for the diagnosis of a SLAP lesion: Systematic review and physician survey,”6 Kibler and Sciascia, from Lexington, Kentucky, identify controversy in our literature concerning lesions of the superior labrum from anterior to posterior or SLAP. How do we make a diagnosis? Usually it is obvious from the history, physical examination, or imaging. However, for SLAP lesions, it seems that arthroscopy is not only the most accurate and precise gold standard for getting the diagnosis right, but perhaps the sole method surgeons trust, a slap-in-the-face to the revered trinity of history, physical examination, and imaging. Kibler and Sciascia are clever. Their purpose is to determine how to diagnose a SLAP tear and, like detectives, they leave nothing to chance. Thus they use two methods: systematic review of the literature and a survey of expert opinion. While surveys have their pluses and minuses,7 expert opinion is of great value in guiding clinical practice, especially when the literature is insufficient.8-14 The results: the literature is inconsistent. Experts rank arthroscopy number 1. Surgeons preparing for arthroscopic shoulder surgery must carefully study Kibler and Sciascia’s results and discussion. The findings are obviously much more nuanced. In addition, we recommend that all surgeons preparing for arthroscopic shoulder surgery take Kibler and Sciascia’s survey (Kibler and Sciascia, Appendix 1, available at www.arthroscopyjournal.org).6 The effort could be educational as well as enjoyable.

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References
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