

## Knee Trouble; Hold the MRI!

Knee trouble is one of the most common problems we see in the office. Family physicians see a lot of people in their offices with knee problems, too. It seems like we see more than we used to in patients of all age groups.

Why this is I'm not sure, but the origin of the problem is not what I wanted to tell you about.

It is important to tell you how a person with a knee problem is evaluated from an x-ray standpoint.

You already know that in examining any orthopaedic problem, careful history and physical exam are the most important steps. While we usually do x-rays when dealing with knee problems, we are talking about plain, ordinary x-rays that have been around for decades.

These are the most important things to do after taking the history and doing the exam. Plain x-rays please. Not MRI! Hold the MRI!

Why do I say this? Am I old fashioned? Don't like new technology? No, it's just the correct way to do things.

Most patients and sometimes non orthopaedic doctors think the MRI has replaced plain x-rays, because on MRI you "can see a lot more".

But you don't always have to see a lot more. Plain x-rays alone often give the answer and an MRI adds nothing to the evaluation. You would not believe how many patients we see who have had an MRI first and never have had a plain x-ray of the knee in this case.

MRI does however add a huge cost to the overall evaluation, at least 10 - 15 times as much as plain x-rays! The MRI is also uncomfortable and difficult for patients who are having pain.

MRI is wonderful and has a proper place in diagnosis. However, it has become so well known and appealing as a major new technology that our patients often think they didn't get good care if an MRI isn't done. I guess in this small way I am trying to help patients understand that you can have good care without an MRI. It is up to us as doctors not to over use tests just because they are popular and our patients want the newest technology.

I don't mind at all when patients come to my office or the LCWC Clinic and have had no x-rays of any kind. That gives me the most freedom in choosing what that particular person needs.

Knee problems or any other Orthopaedic Surgery condition can be evaluated by Dr. Haverbush at Lakeview Community Wellness Center. Future Clinic dates are April 4 and April 18, 2008.

Please call 989-463-6092 to schedule an appointment.

Dr. Haverbush