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Health newsfeed for Tuesday, February 18, 2014

HEADLINE: VERY COMMON

ANCHOR LEAD: SHOULDER INJURY IS ONE OF THE LEADING REASONS OLDER PEOPLE SEEK MEDICAL CARE, BUT IT NEEDS TO BE UNDERSTOOD, ELIZABETH TRACEY REPORTS

Shoulder injuries, known as rotator cuff disease, are a leading cause of pain and disability, especially in older people. Now Edward McFarland, a shoulder expert and surgeon at Johns Hopkins, says medical professionals really need to rethink the condition and its most appropriate treatment.

MCFARLAND: Our article was really a call to people to start to rethink the way we talk about rotator cuff disease. Rather than talk about impingement we now think it's mostly just a gradual wear and tear of the tendon that occurs due to getting older. There's something intrinsic in all the tendons of your body where as you get older they just don't heal as well and they are subject to rupture. In their fifties is when we start to see that the rotator cuff is starting to tear in some people for no apparent good reason. Usually by their 70s and 80s there are a lot of people walking around with tears of their rotator cuff who don't even know it. :33

McFarland says unless pain and disability don't respond to conservative therapy, immediate surgery is not needed. At Johns Hopkins, I'm Elizabeth Tracey.