

Femoroacetabular Impingement

Although many lives have been improved by the use of **total hip** and **total knee replacement** surgery for the treatment of severe osteoarthritis I think that it would be fair to say that an even greater treatment would be one that would prevent the osteoarthritis from developing in the first place.

With knowledge brought about by the stunning research performed by Dr. Reinhold Ganz of Bern, Switzerland we now have just that opportunity; that is, the ability to prevent osteoarthritis in a group of patients previously felt to be inevitably destined to **total hip replacement**.

This group of patients has a condition called **femoroacetabular impingement (FAI)**. **Femoroacetabular impingement** is a constellation of anatomic abnormalities that leads to a bony impingement between the femoral neck and the rim of the acetabulum. Over time this impingement leads to degeneration and tearing of the labrum and subsequent destruction of the acetabular articular cartilage. This articular cartilage destruction is the sine qua non of osteoarthritis. Once established the osteoarthritis progresses onto complete joint destruction, and the need for **total hip replacement**.

Treatment of **FAI** consists of surgical correction of the anatomic abnormalities thus preventing labral and articular cartilage destruction. The key to treatment is the early recognition of the condition. This is made difficult by the fact that patients remain minimally symptomatic until significant labral injury begins to cause pain. Limited hip range of motion without pain should alert the physician to the possibility of **FAI**. Routine hip radiographs may be read as normal even in cases where **FAI** exists, and special views may be necessary to demonstrate **FAI**.

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