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CASE REPORT - The Importance of Whole Upper Limb Strengthening in Lateral Epicondylopathy

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BACKGROUND
This case report discusses the treatment of a 37 year old female recreational tennis player who presented with a lateral epicondylopathy categorised in the tendon disrepair stage of the continuum model (1).

INITIAL RESPONSE
The patient responded well initially to the treatment approach but returned to the clinic with a recurrence of symptoms following return to full sporting activities.

INITIAL TREATMENT
This involved restoring lost terminal ROM into extension using DTFM (2) and Mill’s manipulation followed by eccentric loading (3) & (4) through range. A novel device consisting of a 6m-resistance band threaded through a tennis ball to progressively load and challenge the patient was used for sports specific rehabilitation.

FURTHER INVESTIGATIONS
Upon return to the clinic, strength testing through ROM revealed a comparative difference between the affected and non-affected side. The differences were small but a secondary hypothesis was generated suggesting a background weakness of whole upper limb strengthening potentially perpetuating the symptoms.

FURTHER INTERVENTION
A programme of full upper limb strengthening was instigated over a period of 12 weeks. This included shoulder, bicep, tricep and forearm strengthening.

CONCLUSION
The authors recognise this is a singular case study and therefore many limitations exist. However the presence of a poor overall upper limb strength may perpetuate symptoms in lateral epicondylopathy. More robust clinical trials are required to examine this suggestion.

REFERENCES