SELF-FUNDED PHD OPPORTUNITY

**Clinical Significance and Diagnostic Accuracy of Special tests in Rotator Cuff Related Shoulder Pain**

Special tests are typically used to assist in the diagnostic process by implicating specific tissue structures that are either dysfunctional, pathological, or lack structural integrity, confirming the findings from the physical assessment and providing a tentative diagnosis (Magee, 2014). Special testing of the shoulder is generally performed following a full examination of the shoulder (Biederwolf, 2013). Reproduction of pain, and weakness during these special tests are considered clinically diagnostic. A recent systematic review identified a lack of high-quality studies evaluating inter-rater as well as intra-rater reliability of 62 specific special tests for the diagnosis of shoulder pathologies (Lange et al., 2017). Another study (Ujsasi et al., 2022) reviewed the applicability of special tests in the diagnosis of rotator cuff muscle Injuries of university athletes after comparing the results with ultrasonographic testing of the muscles and concluded that special tests are good predictors of soft tissue changes in the muscles of the rotator cuff of the shoulder; however, they call for further monitoring and analysis on larger numbers.

In contrast, other researchers have questioned the validity and usefulness of the shoulder special tests; suggesting they should be put out to pasture (Salamh & Lewis, 2020).

We are looking for a PhD student who would like to develop an in-depth mixed-methods study to enhance our understanding of: (i) which special tests are currently used by NHS physiotherapists and (ii) the evidence of their diagnostic accuracy. This multi-disciplinary, collaborative study will be conducted across both UW and NHS environments, offering an opportunity for the successful applicant to develop an applied, impactful research study which could enhance physiotherapy practice and patient experience and outcomes in this important area.

**Supervisory Team**

Director of Studies: Dr Konstantinos Papadopoulos, PhD. Head of Department for Occupational Therapy, Physiotherapy and Nutritional Therapy courses, LWLTC co-lead.

Professor Dez Kyte, PhD. Professor of Physiotherapy, Living with Long-term Conditions Research Group Lead, University of Worcester.

**References**

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