REHABILITATION PROTOCOL FOR
SMALL ROTATOR CUFF REPAIR

APPOINTMENTS:
- Clinic appointments at 8 to 11 days, then at 6 weeks, 12 weeks, and 18 weeks
- Physical therapy appointment starting at 2 weeks, lasting 12 to 18 weeks

ACUTE PHASE: Surgery to 2 weeks post-op
- Immobilize shoulder in abduction sling
- Remove sling 5 times a day to work on range of motion exercises for the hand, wrist and elbow and work on shoulder shrugs and pendulum exercises
- Ice as needed
- Work restrictions - No use of the arm

PHASE I: 2 to 4 weeks post-op
- Gradually wean out of the sling; wear it at night until 6 weeks
- Continue pendulum exercises
- Begin physical therapy and continue exercises at home daily:
  - Pulley for passive flexion and abduction to 90 degrees
  - Table slides for passive flexion and abduction
  - Passive ROM with cane for flex/ext, adduction, and IR/ER
  - Towel stretch for IR
  - Isometric strengthening
  - Modalities as needed – heat, ice, ultrasound
  - NO ACTIVE ABDUCTION
- Work restrictions - No use of the arm

PHASE II: 4 to 6 weeks post-op
- Continue physical therapy and home exercises:
  - Continue pulley for passive flexion and abduction; progress to 180 degrees
  - Begin supine AAROM with therapist for flex/ext, abduction/adduction, IR/ER at 0 degrees abduction
  - Begin PREs for flex/ext, abduction/adduction, IR/ER at 0 degrees abduction using therabands
  - Standing supraspinatus exercise to 90 degrees with gravity resistance only
  - PNF diagonals below 90 degrees, light resistance theraband
  - Light closed chain and scapular exercises
  - Goal of FROM at end of phase II
- Work restrictions - No use of the arm

PHASE III: 6 to 12 weeks post-op
- Continue physical therapy and home exercises:
  - Continue P/AA/AROM stretches
  - Continue pulley for passive flexion and abduction to 180 degrees
  - Begin supraspinatus PREs
  - Progress IR/ER PREs to 90 degrees abduction
  - Weight training for biceps, triceps
  - No lifting greater than 5 pounds
- Work restrictions
  - Limited overhead use
  - No lifting, pushing or pulling greater than 5 pounds

PHASE IV: 12 to 24 weeks post-op
- Continue physical therapy, transitioning to home exercise program if able
  - PREs including isolated supraspinatus strengthening and prone ER at 90 degrees
  - Global strengthening
  - Begin work-related or sports-specific conditioning
  - Progress to work hardening/FCE if appropriate
- Work restrictions
  - No lifting, pushing or pulling greater than 15 pounds until 18 weeks, than 25 pounds until 6 months
  - Goal of return to work without restrictions by 6 months