

GONE! NECK AND BACK PAIN

New Treatment Available

-Liz Whiteside

The bones of the spine (vertebrae) have an important role in protecting your spinal column. Vertebral fractures have become increasingly recognized as a cause of pain and decline in health. Each year, approximately 700,000 fractures of the vertebrae occur in the United States, with 85% association with osteoporosis. Osteoporosis causes bones to weaken, making them susceptible to fractures.

For Americans over the age of 65, these fractures account for 150,000 hospital admissions on an annual basis. Patients with vertebral fractures often have symptoms that include pain, difficulty moving, deformity (such as becoming "humpbacked") and even weakness. Most people sustain these fractures after falling, stepping off a curb, or merely sneezing.

Traditional treatment of many fractures related to osteoporosis begins with non-surgical measures, such as bed rest, anti-inflammatory medications, physical therapy and wearing back braces. Surgery of the spinal column has been typically reserved for situations where the spinal cord is at risk, indicated by weakness or numbness in the legs.

When conservative treatment of vertebral fractures does not help, a new technique enables some to overcome the pain without surgery. Vertebroplasty (pronounced "vur-tee-bro-plaz-te") is a non-surgical procedure used by some spine specialists to repair some vertebral fractures. Vertebroplasty helps to stabilize spine fractures, which alleviates pain and restores the patient's quality of life.

Vertebroplasty is designed to reinforce the structural integrity of fractured vertebrae, filling in the fractures with a special cement-like substance. The material has been successfully used to treat vertebral tumors, and cancerous tumors that involve the spine, and deterioration of the spine due to osteoporosis. Approximately 90% of patients treated with Vertebroplasty have experienced prompt relief of pain, usually within 1-2 days following treatment.

In addition to being one of the most active physicians in performing this procedure in southwest Florida, Michael Frey, MD of Advanced Pain Management & Spine Specialists is a frequent speaker and instructor to others in the medical profession on the technique. A spine specialist as well as a pain medicine specialist who has performed over 800 Vertebroplasty procedures, his national and international presentations have been beneficial in expanding this non-surgical option in the pain management field. Additionally, Dr.

Frey was one of three research participants with findings on the treatment unveiled at the North American Spine Society's 21st Annual Meeting in Seattle.

The procedure is safe and performed in their South Fort Myers office. The patient lies comfortably in a face-down position, relaxing under conscious sedation. While performing Vertebroplasty, Dr. Frey uses fluoroscopic x-rays to give him actual imaging during the procedure. This x-ray guidance enables Dr. Frey to identify specific areas of the bone as he inserts a special needle. Dye is injected to highlight the structure of the vertebrae. As Dr. Frey monitors the injection process with the help of x-ray imaging, the cement is applied. After the vertebrae is filled, he gently removes the syringe and the cement begins to harden within minutes.

Dr. Frey comments, "Vertebroplasty repairs these fractures permanently by filling them in with a material that bonds to living bone. The procedure takes between 15 minutes to an hour and most patients are back to normal activity within a day or two. Unlike many procedures, Vertebroplasty doesn't require an overnight stay at the hospital, which patients also appreciate."

If you are interested in learning more about Vertebroplasty, or any procedure that can help you (or someone you know) overcome back pain, call

**Advanced Pain Management & Spine Specialists at
(239) 437-8000 for additional information
or visit: www.apmss.net**



Dr. Michael Frey, MD of Advanced Pain Management & Spine Specialists

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