

Good Results Speak Loudly

by the Academic Board of the American Academy of Spine Physicians

A 51-year-old male had developed low back pain with radiation down the left leg. It was of gradual onset. Initially, the pain was intermittent, but then became constant. The patient's family doctor placed him on muscle relaxants and analgesics; this helped, but did not alleviate his condition. The doctor ordered lumbar spine X-rays, which showed degenerative changes, including disc space narrowing involving the lowest two disc spaces. There was foraminal narrowing secondary to osteophytes at those levels, and degenerative changes were noted in the facet joints at L5-S1. The patient was referred to a neurosurgeon, who found no weakness or sensory deficit. He placed the patient on two weeks of bed rest, which resulted in little improvement.

When the neurosurgeon saw the patient at follow-up, he recommended more bed rest. Because the patient had not benefited much from the previous course of bed rest, he asked the neurosurgeon for a referral to a chiropractic physician. The neurosurgeon was upset. He said he knew nothing about chiropractors and chiropractic treatment, and recommended that the patient not go to a chiropractic physician.

Several years ago, a friend of the patient had a similar problem treated successfully by chiropractic manipulative therapy; therefore, the patient contacted his friend and got the name of the chiropractic physician. He then called and made an appointment. The patient's neurosurgeon would not give him the lumbar spine X-rays "to take to a chiropractor." The chiropractor examined him, repeated the lumbar spine X-rays and began therapy. Within two weeks, the radiating leg pain was gone; by the end of the month, the patient had no low back pain.

Enthusiastic about his result, the patient returned to the neurosurgeon, who was impressed with what the chiropractic physician was able to do. He contacted the chiropractic physician, and the two met to discuss chiropractic manipulative therapy. One week later, the neurosurgeon visited the chiropractor's office and observed various types of treatment. From that time on, the two doctors referred patients to one another, and enjoyed the results of cooperative spine care. They both benefited, as did their patients.

The Point

Good results speak loudly. Be ready to learn about another doctor's field when impressed with good results. You may end up in a very satisfying professional (and sometimes, personal) relationship.

The American Academy of Spine Physicians

Elgin, Illinois

(847) 697-4660

aasp@spinephysicians.org

www.spinephysicians.org

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