

Carrasco Pain Institute

Newsletter - Quarterly

Pain Management • Rehabilitation • Medical Spa Volume II - Issue 2 / Spring 2007

Lumbar Canal Stenosis

Lumbar Canal Stenosis

Why Do I have Pain When I Walk?

Lumbar Canal Stenosis (LCS) is one of the common causes of Low Back Pain that occurs in many active patients—especially patients in their late 50's and 60's. The symptoms may begin many years earlier, sometimes 5-10 years, and over 2- 3 months become more severe causing the patient to become less active and the pain medications no longer give as much pain relief. The patient's family usually states that their spouse, parent, or sibling is having pain that is not relieved with meds and is not able to enjoy their usual daily activities. The patient's MRI indicates "degeneration of the disc(s)" and maybe even the small joints in the low back.



Less pain, more function

What is Lumbar Canal Stenosis (LCS)?

Lumbar canal stenosis is caused by degeneration of the discs and overgrowth of the small facet joints—as a result, the spinal canal is narrowed (stenosis) and/or the tunnels where the nerves exit the spine are also narrowed causing pressure on the nerves and inflammation. This inflammation causes pain!

What are the signs and symptoms of LCS?

The person notes a gradual worsening of pain to the low back and/or the buttocks and legs over several months. Typically, the person can walk a certain distance before the pain starts and is relieved with rest or sitting—they can then walk the same distance before the cycle returns. As the LCS progresses the patient begins to have pain with sitting and in more severe cases the pain occurs even while lying down.

What are the treatment options for LCS?

Lumbar canal stenosis is usually related to the natural and irreversible aging process; therefore, non-surgical treatment options are aimed at relieving the pressure of the nerves causing the inflammation and pain. Relieving the inflammation decreases the pain and allows the second phase of treatment ---rehabilitation to be effective. The non-operative options are medications, rehabilitation, and pain management procedures.

Medications - Non-Steroidal anti-inflammatory medications (NSAIDS), muscle relaxants, and various narcotic and non-narcotic pain meds are ingested to control the pain and minimize the side effects. When the side-effects outweigh the pain relieving effects, the following option are considered. (see page 2 & 3)

The Institute

The Carrasco Pain Institute and Dr. Arnulfo Tarin Carrasco, our Medical Director are preparing to celebrate their 15th year anniversary. Over the past 15 years Dr. Carrasco and his staff have successfully treated many patients with pain and spasticity. We would like to take this opportunity to thank all of our patients, family, friends and supporters.

In recent years, we have expanded our medical practice to include a Rehabilitation/Fitness Center, a Medical Spa, and an onsite Surgical Suite. Our newest addition, the Conference Center, will host educational conferences for doctors, medical staff, patients and our community.

We look forward to serving our past and future patients across Texas, the United States and México. We invite you to visit our Institute located at La Hacienda de Salud Medical Community in the prestigious Medical Center of San Antonio, Texas.

Upcoming Events

- **15th year anniversary of CPI** - Summer 2007
- **Mother's Day, Weddings, Graduation** – Relax at the Spa – call for details.
- **Hands-on Training Course** - Cosmetic Botox, call for details



Arnulfo Tarin Carrasco, M.D.

Thanks to your positive feedback and input, we are pressing forward with our second year of quarterly newsletters.

*In this our first Newsletter of 2007, we will provide a brief review of a common pain complaint, **Lumbar Canal Stenosis**.*

This diagnosis not only affects the patient, but all the caregivers, i.e., spouses, children, facility staff, etc... The impact of a gradually less functional and less active individual can be great and give the caregivers a feeling of helplessness.

The treatment for this condition varies from NSAIDS, muscle relaxants, pain medications, rehabilitation, to epidural injections, and in more severe cases possibly even surgery. The goals of treatment are pain relief, and resumption of a fuller, active lifestyle and in most cases these can be achieved by early recognition and treatment

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The
Carrasco Pain Institute

Pain Management

LUMBAR CANAL STENOSIS / EPIDURAL STERIOD INJECTIONS

Pain Management

An Epidural Injection (ESI) to the lower back may be used to help relieve the swelling and inflammation on the nerve roots, commonly seen in Lumbar Canal Stenosis. These injections help to decrease the swelling and give the nerve more room inside the canal, thus decreasing the pain resulting in increased function.

What is an epidural steroid injection?

An epidural injection involves the placement of local anesthetic and a small amount of corticosteroid into the epidural space. The procedure may be performed in the cervical, thoracic, lumbar or caudal region of the spine. The epidural injection is performed in an effort to decrease the amount of pain a person is experiencing. The steroid is used to decrease the inflammation of the nerve roots. Epidural injections are often used in an effort to avoid surgery.

What should I expect?

The epidural injection is an outpatient procedure. You will receive a sedative through an IV for the procedure. You will probably not remember much about the procedure. During the procedure the nursing staff will monitor your blood pressure, pulse, respiration, and oxygen level. After the procedure you will be monitored for 30-45 minutes, and after you recover you will be discharged home with a family member or a friend.

How often can I receive an epidural steroid injection?

Many times epidural injections are performed in a series of two or three injections, two weeks apart. Most commonly a person will have no more than three injections within a six month time frame. The total number of injections an individual may undergo is based on the total amount of steroid injected.

Are epidural steroid injections safe?

Dr. Carrasco performs the procedure under fluoroscopic guidance which is a type of x-ray that will allow the doctor to confirm needle placement in the epidural space prior to the injection. After the procedure, you will be given a set of discharge instructions. You will be asked to call our office the next day to update our staff on your condition. The most common side effects are temporary fluid retention, increased appetite, and possible slight weight gain. Individuals with diabetes may note an increase in their blood sugar. We ask you to consult your primary care physician for help with the management of your blood sugar during this time.

Is surgery necessary in LCS?

In more severe cases the person may benefit from surgery aimed at relieving the pressure and compression on the canal and exiting nerve roots. The surgeon will review your MRI, CT and other studies and determine if surgery is needed.



Dr. Carrasco performing an ESI in the Carrasco Pain Institute surgical suite.



Patient in our rehab facility

Rehabilitation

An exercise program designed to help relieve pressure off the nerves. Relieving the pressure decreases the pain and numbness associated with Lumbar Canal Stenosis. The therapy will include heat, e-stim, stretching, strengthening, gait and balance training, and soft tissue mobilization with massage. The goal of rehabilitation will be to increase back movement, strength, endurance and restore function. In many cases, the patients have a greater and more rapid improvement when the injections are performed before or during rehab and may include the following:

Gait Training – Instruction by the therapist to re-establish a normal pattern of walking, either with or without an assistive device.

Soft Tissue Mobilization/Massage – Performed by the therapist to increase circulation, improve tissue extensibility of soft tissues, and decrease pain. This is a gentler form of massage that targets more superficial muscles, tendons, etc... and may include myofascial release.

Electrical Stimulation – Electrodes are placed on or around the affected area in order to decrease swelling, decrease pain, reduce muscle spasm, and promote tissue healing.

Balance/Proprioception Training – Skills used to re-establish a sense of balance throughout the body or to re-establish balance pertaining to a specific joint (i.e., knee or ankle). This is especially important after a soft-tissue injury (to a ligament, joint capsule, or tendon) in which a joint has lost stability and needs to be reinforced by nerve endings that give the joint a sense of its position in space.

Daily Maintenance and Stretching – A patient who continues their rehabilitation program at home tends to maintain function, strength, and activity levels.



Through this newsletter we would like to inform you on the various healthy and life long benefits of massage therapy. Massage therapy has been used for many years to treat a multitude of ailments including low back pain.

Low Back Pain

If you have low back pain, you may be suffering from stress, depression, poor body mechanics, a motor vehicle accident, a work related injury, or from a weekend warrior activity. Back pain is real and if you have it you are probably looking for relief. Millions of Americans will deal with

back pain at some point in their life. As a result of this back pain they are searching through their medicine cabinets, buying the newest gadgets to relieve pain, and taking time off work to visit their family physician. Massage may be the answer to your ongoing low back pain.

Research on Massage Therapy

A survey conducted by the American Massage Therapy Association found the number of adults receiving massages from a massage therapist has more than double since 1997. Fifty-four percent of healthcare providers say they encourage their patients to pursue massage therapy in addition to other medical treatment. A study on massage and back pain found that: "Massage lessened lower back pain, depression and anxiety, and improved sleep." The massage therapy group in this study also showed improved

Rehabilitation

LESS PAIN, MORE FUNCTION

Medical Spa

The Pain Spa

range of motion and their serotonin and dopamine levels were higher." (International Journal of Neuroscience, 106, 131-145.)

Benefits of Massage Therapy

According to the American Massage Therapy Association, research shows massage therapy provides several important benefits, including:

- Alleviating low back pain, relaxing muscles, and improving range of motion
- Improving blood circulation allowing for decreased muscle soreness.
- Boosting the body's immune system by stimulating lymph flow
- Ease medication dependence
- Increasing endorphin levels that make you feel good; which is very effective in managing chronic pain.
- Lessen depression and anxiety

The massage therapists at the Carrasco Pain Institute Rehabilitation and Spa are skilled professionals in dealing with the effects of low back pain and can provide you with the relief you deserve.

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Noticias News



Lecture Series

May
Lumbar Canal Stenosis

June
Epidural Steroid Injections

The Next Issue

Pain Management
Peripheral Neuropathy

Rehabilitation
Desensitization & Gait Training

Medical Spa
Myofascial Release

Legend

1. *Dr. Carrasco performs ESI*
2. *Rehab in progress*
3. *Hydrotherapy treatment*
4. *Carrasco Pain Institute Building*
5. *Cosmetic Botox*

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This information is provided by the Carrasco Pain Institute and is not intended to replace the medical advice of your doctor or health care provider. Please consult your health care provider for advice about a specific medical condition. For additional information or an appointment for a consultation and evaluation, please contact the Carrasco Pain Institute at (210) 614-4825 or visit us at www.CarrascoPainInstitute.com