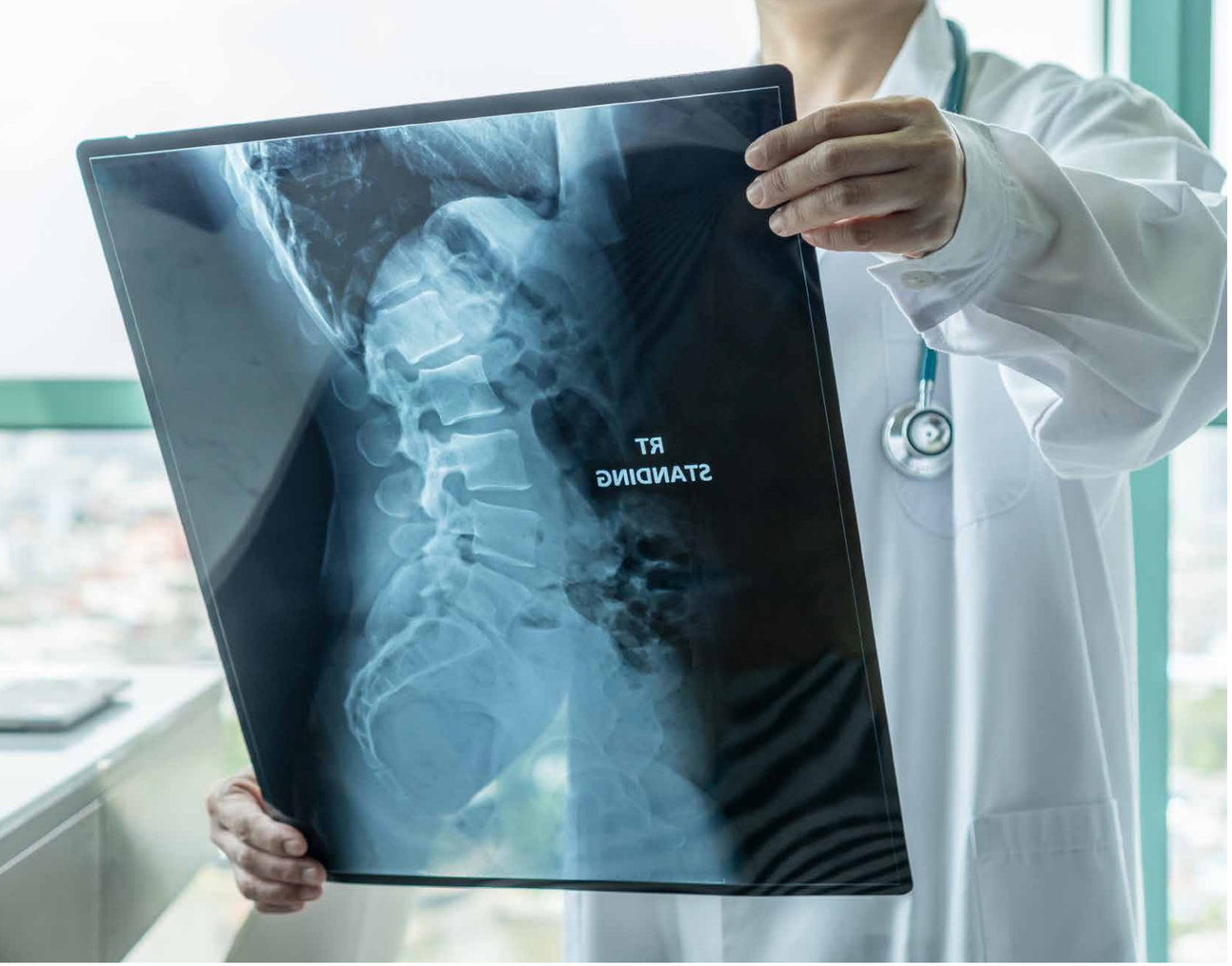

Lumbar SPINAL Stenosis

BY DR. SETH SOHN

LSS is the narrowing of the spinal canal that compresses nerve roots traveling through the back.

Lumbar spinal stenosis (LSS) is a common medical condition in the elderly population that affects over a million patients in the United States. LSS is the narrowing of the spinal canal that compresses nerve roots traveling through the back. This can be caused by degenerative disc disease; arthritic changes in the spine; and, at times, the sliding of one vertebra over another, resulting in the compression of both the nerves and the blood supply to the area. Symptoms can include pain in the back, buttocks, and lower extremities as well as weakness, aching, cramping, fatigue, numbness, and loss of mobility. Patients with LSS report difficulty performing activities of daily living that require standing or walking and report improvement in their pain with sitting or leaning forward, such as on a shopping cart or walker.

Traditionally, this condition has been treated with physical therapy; medications; and interventional options, such as epidural steroid injections or surgical decompression for the affected levels. Recently, an FDA approved product by Vertiflex™ for the treatment of this condition was introduced in the United States called the Superion™ Indirect Decompression System, or spinous spacer. This implantable device offers a minimally invasive option to treat mild to moderate spinal stenosis, resulting in significantly less recovery time than traditional surgical options.

The spinous spacer is supported by robust research, with studies showing comparable outcomes to traditional decompression with laminectomy, which has been considered the gold standard for treatment of spinal stenosis. It's believed that this device offers an effective treatment option for patients that have failed to see relief with conservative care but are not yet considered candidates for traditional surgical intervention or want to avoid a significantly more invasive surgery.

As a same-day outpatient procedure, the quarter-sized device is implanted under x-ray guidance through a small one- to one-and-a-half-centimeter incision. The implant works by preventing the spinal levels treated from moving into extension, the position that causes pain when standing and walking. This device does not restrict motion in any other plane, reducing the risk of more rapid degeneration at untreated levels as seen with traditional decompression with fusion. Patient recovery typically consists of minor surgical discomfort at the incision site for a week and light activity for four weeks. Patients typically report improvement in their symptoms within two to four weeks. Having this procedure does not affect the patient's ability to pursue more-aggressive surgical intervention in the future, as it does not alter the anatomy of the spine in any way and can be removed if needed.

The Vertiflex spinous spacer is a safe and reversible procedure for the patient with spinal stenosis looking to prevent or prolong the need for more aggressive surgical intervention. If you or a loved one have been diagnosed with, or have symptoms consistent with, spinal stenosis, such as pain, numbness, cramping, and fatigue in the back and legs, and are looking for a noninvasive treatment options that allow you to get back to a more active lifestyle, the spinous spacer might be right for you.

Dr. Seth Sohn, board certified in anesthesiology, is a highly trained interventional pain physician experienced in neuromodulation, spinal stimulation, and intrathecal drug delivery among other techniques.

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