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Back Pain: Modern Tools Help solve a Tricky Problem

Do you have back pain? Statistics say that you do—as many as 80 percent of us will suffer from significant back pain during our lifetime. As a physical medicine specialist, I have focused on bringing the latest in dynamic ultrasound diagnostics and regenerative therapies to this complex issue, and have treated thousands of patients with undiagnosed and unrelieved back pain over the last decade at my practice, BOUNDLESS.

Many of my patients' stories have stayed with me. M.J., a mom of two, came to my clinic 3 years ago with back pain so severe she could not run or bike for exercise, drive long distances, or play with her kids. She had tried physical therapy, epidural injections, radiofrequency ablation, and opioid medical management—all without sufficient relief. She was considering fusion surgery for degenerative disc disease, but was told the chance of success was at best 70 percent.

Like M.J., many of us have back pain—it is a leading cause of disability and consumes billions of dollars a year in lost productivity and unsuccessful medical care.

Back pain is complex. X-rays and MRIs typically only diagnose a small percentage of the reasons our back hurts—they show arthritic joints, pinched nerves, and degenerated or herniated disks.

But much of our pain comes from ligaments, muscles, sacroiliac joints, and fascia, and needs specialized



MODERN TOOLS, such as ultrasound diagnosis and regenerative therapies, can help solve even complex back pain
Courtesy photo

testing for proper diagnosis.

Advanced ultrasound diagnostics can allow us to see these “soft tissue” problems, and has helped make the diagnosis in many patients suffering with “non-specific” back pain. Over the last decade, I have seen many fascial and ligament tears, inflamed joints, and nerves caught in scar tissue that MRIs and X-rays have missed. M.J., for example, had a tear in the iliolumbar ligament that connects the pelvis to the back—easily seen on ultrasound, but never before diagnosed for M.J.

As our ability to diagnose soft tissue injuries has become more sophisticated, so has our ability to heal

these injuries. We now have a palette of regenerative therapies, from dextrose-based prolotherapy, platelet-rich plasma (PRP), and growth factor/exosome preparations to the latest in amniotic, umbilical cord, and bone marrow cellular treatments.

These can help heal ligament, muscle, and fascia tears; release and calm nerves; and improve pain—they offer hope for patients facing a lifetime of suffering.

Like real estate, location is important when it comes to treating the back. M.J. had PRP injected directly into the iliolumbar tear under ultrasound guidance and within 3 months began to have sufficient reduction of pain to

taper her medications. After a recent follow-up with me, she was leaving for vacation with her family and looking forward to hiking without pain.

For patients such as M.J. and many others like her, recent advances in ultrasound diagnostics coupled with ultrasound-guided regenerative injections may be their best path to a pain-free life.

To learn more, please join me, Alexandra Bunyak, MD, RMSK, for a 45-minute talk about advanced spinal diagnosis and healing the back with regenerative medicine.

Seating is very limited for this free gathering (Friday, Oct. 26, at 1 p.m.), and an RSVP is required: (760) 632-1090.