

Letter to the Editor: Laser Spine Institute Explains Mission

By Rachel Fields
May 24, 2011

The following letter was sent from Laser Spine Institute to the Becker's ASC Review editorial team on Monday, May 23. Please contact Rachel Fields at rachel@beckersasc.com with any questions.

Dear Rachel:

We are extremely pleased that Becker's ASC and Hospital Reviews has named Laser Spine Institute among the Nation's Best 100 Places to Work in Healthcare. We have also been recently recognized among the Top Places to Work by the Tampa, Fla. publications *St. Petersburg Times* and *Tampa Bay Business Journal* in accordance with BusinessJournals.com.

Because a public misperception still exists that endoscopic spine surgery is unproven, Laser Spine Institute continually strives to inform the public that, in fact, our procedures have been performed for decades. During the past six years, we have performed more than 20,000 surgeries with patients reporting an 87 percent average quality of improvement. This exceptionally high improvement percentage is allowing patients to return to their normal activities quickly and gain a better quality of life overall. We try to provide the general public with a better understanding of the benefits that minimally invasive spine surgery can provide, including these facts especially:

- Outpatient procedure
- No lengthy recovery
- Less than 1-inch incision
- No general anesthesia
- No fusions or hardware
- 90 percent patient satisfaction rate

As compared to a fusion, Laser Spine Institute's procedures lead to fewer complications, a quicker return to work and daily activities and less overall cost due to less resource utilization (lower OR time, fewer complications, no implant cost and no hospital length of stay). Our success rate speaks for itself. We perform more minimally invasive spine procedures monthly than any other spine surgery center in the world; what we do at Laser Spine Institute works and changes people's lives every single day.

Perhaps the use of the word "laser" alarms or confuses the public. We decided to call our company Laser Spine Institute based upon how the laser is involved in our procedures, yet the laser is actually just one of many tools we use to perform our successful endoscopic surgeries. We primarily use tools such as ronguers, burrs and drills in our procedures. At Laser Spine Institute, only 50 percent of our procedures are laser-assisted. Only 10 percent of our procedures are laser-based if there is a benefit to the patient and we deem it medically necessary. In a laser-assisted or laser-based surgery, the laser has three functions: the instrument cuts, cauterizes and vaporizes soft tissue, but it does not cut through bone, which would require too much energy and would produce excess heat. The laser is a very precise,

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accurate and safe instrument to treat back pain; nevertheless, the general public can be wary of its uses in surgery. The healthcare industry must work to overcome this misperception.

Laser Spine Institute has proven success and continued growth since its launch in 2005, with four surgical centers and five medical consultation facilities through the United States. The Accreditation Association for Ambulatory Health Care recognizes our surgical centers in Tampa, Scottsdale and Philadelphia as providers of the highest level of patient care. Laser Spine Institute places such a high priority on patient safety that we created a company-wide Risk Manager/Patient Safety Officer position that is filled by an experienced surgery center RN with advanced training and certification, and a passion for patient safety.

All surgeons complete Laser Spine Institute's proprietary fellowship training, led by Chairman of Surgery Emeritus, Founder Dr. James St. Louis, two-time recipient of the Physician of the Year award in 2005 and 2008 by the American Association of Physician Specialists in the field of Orthopedic Surgery. Together, our surgeons have more than 60 years of procedure-specific experience in endoscopic spine surgery.

In addition to many achievement awards from patient groups and professional associations, Laser Spine Institute physicians have also contributed their experience with publication in respected periodicals. Dr. Anand Ashok Gandhi had an article published in "The Comprehensive Treatment of the Aging Spine: Minimally Invasive and Advanced Techniques" titled "Yoga and the Aging Spine." In addition, John A. Polikandriotis, Ph.D. MBA, senior director of strategic initiatives; Dr. Michael W. Perry, medical director; and Dr. Vernon R. Morris, spine surgeon; have been published in the Journal of Musculoskeletal Medicine. The peer-reviewed study was titled "Surgery without Instrumentation for Spondylolisthesis-Related Stenosis."

Our type of surgery is a great option for people with chronic back and neck pain, but it is absolutely not a solution for every person out there. In fact, we invest a significant amount of time to ensure that before patients make the decision to have surgery at Laser Spine Institute that they have really done their research, exhausted conservative treatments and are an ideal candidate for endoscopic surgery.

At Laser Spine Institute, we first inform patients through our advertising, website and communications. After that, if patients are still interested, we speak with them on the phone an average of 15 times before they ever elect to come to one of our surgery centers. We want to ensure that we have educated them about endoscopic spine care during these interactions. It is important for us to understand what treatments they have received, if any, from other healthcare providers, so we can confidently confirm their candidacy for surgery at our facility. We also believe that understanding where the patient stands from a pain perspective helps both parties make an educated decision about whether or not the patient should make the trip to one of our nationwide centers. In fact, only 8 percent of those who contact Laser Spine Institute actually have surgery with us.

This stringent up-front process screens for patients who will experience the best possible outcomes. We recognize that we cannot be everything to everyone, but it is our mission to help relieve the pain and suffering of people with chronic back and neck pain. Laser Spine Institute's

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thoughtful approach to patient care has resulted in successful outcomes that confirm that our minimally invasive procedures are the safe and effective alternative to open back or neck surgery:

- 91 percent of patients report returning to work by 12 weeks after surgery at Laser Spine Institute, and 81 percent report returning to work within 6 weeks after surgery.
- Laser Spine Institute's infection rate is only .1 percent, compared to the national hospital average of 4.5 percent.
- 87 percent of patients report a quality of life improvement within three months of surgery at Laser Spine Institute, compared with only 60 percent of patients who report improvement after open back surgery fusions.
- Laser Spine Institute minimally invasive procedures require no hospitalization, while fusions require a 3- to 5-day hospital stay.

In addition to the care we provide to individuals before they arrive and during their time at our facilities, Laser Spine Institute has committed a tremendous amount of resources to following up with patients after their surgery. Our Patient Services Department is not only comprised of surgeons' nurses, but also includes physical therapists who communicate to patients about specific activities that can be done in a manner that is safe after the patient's specific procedure. We are concerned about our patients' post-surgical recovery, and we care about them returning to their highest level of functioning. Patients have truly appreciated our "Above and Beyond" approach to service. In fact, more than 99 percent of Laser Spine Institute patients have said that they would recommend our facility to their friends and family members.

Our research shows that those who have come to Laser Spine Institute experience excellent results, and we are very proud of our 90 percent patient satisfaction rate and the outstanding care we provide.

Sincerely,

Jimmy St. Louis
Chief Corporate Operations Officer MBA, PMP, M.S.
Laser Spine Institute

Learn more about [Laser Spine Institute](#) .