

Washington Health Technology Clinical Committee's Decision to Preserve Coverage for Spinal Injections - A Win for Back Pain Patients

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Chicago – The Multi-society Pain Workgroup (MPW), representing more than 100,000 physicians and 15 medical societies, applauds the Washington State Health Care Authority's Health Technology Clinical Committee (HTCC) for preserving access to spinal injection therapies for millions of people who suffer from back pain.

On March 18, the HTCC held a hearing to determine coverage of spinal injections for Medicaid enrollees, Labor and Industries and state employees. The MPW worked together throughout the past year submitting extensive comments in support of these procedures. The HTCC's decision could have national implications as other states decide whether to cover these procedures.

"I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to all of the MPW societies for lending their voices in support of continued access to spinal injection procedures that are critical to preserving patient quality of life. The collaborative effort and voices of more than 100,000 multidisciplinary pain specialists was heard loud and clear," said Paul Dreyfuss, M.D., former chair of the MPW and clinical professor at the University of Washington, who presented at the hearing. "These therapies, when performed correctly with contemporary techniques, provide patients with significant pain relief, improved function and quality of life."

It is estimated that 80 percent of people experience back pain at some time in their life and more than 100 million Americans suffer from chronic pain. Some patients suffering from chronic pain have failed more conservative therapies such as medications and physical therapy. In some cases, alternatives such as non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medications (NSAIDs) and opioids have the potential for serious adverse effects such as gastrointestinal (GI) bleeding, abuse, addiction and death.

The decision to retain coverage of spinal injection therapies is consistent with the scientific evidence supporting safety and efficacy.

Maintaining access to spinal injection therapies can provide patients with the significant benefits of pain relief, improved function and quality of life, reducing their need for surgery or opioids, which is particularly important in light of the national opioid abuse epidemic.

The Multi-society Pain Workgroup is comprised of the following societies:

- American Academy of Pain Medicine
- American Academy of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation
- American Association of Neurological Surgeons
- American College of Radiology
- American Pain Society

American Society of Anesthesiologists
American Society of Neuroradiology
American Society of Regional Anesthesia and Pain Medicine
American Society of Spine Radiology
Congress of Neurological Surgeons
North American Neuromodulation Society
North American Spine Society
Society of Interventional Radiology
Spine Intervention Society
Washington State Association of Neurological Surgeons*

*WSANS represents neurosurgeons in the state of Washington, but is not an official member of the MPW.