

A recent article in *The American Journal of Medicine* reveals some shocking statistics. There are 80,000 new cases of failed back surgery every year! That is one in every five surgeries where the patient either did not benefit from the surgery or was made worse because of it. Given the fact that back surgery rates are increasing, I would doubt that these statistics are shared with patients prior to the procedure being performed.

Some of these patients undergo second or even third surgeries and success rates for these surgeries are even worse. I write this as a caution to anyone considering back surgery. When failed surgery rates are this high, it would indicate that it is nearly impossible to know which patients will benefit from surgery and which patients will be made worse.

One of the reasons for this is that research demonstrates that abnormal findings on an MRI, x-ray or cat scan are not necessarily the cause of the pain. If those abnormal tissues are removed or repaired, the pain won't go away if they weren't the cause.

We all have abnormal things going on in our bodies. Most of us would be better off leaving them alone or using more conservative approaches to working with these abnormalities, rather than having surgery.

All other non-surgical options should be exhausted prior to taking this step. So who should you consult? Who are the non-surgical spine experts? To know this, you must look at the education, practice focus, practice experience and published success rate of the treatment methods used by the various health care providers who treat patients with back and neck pain. Among general practitioners, sports physicians, physical therapists, pain specialists, and chiropractors; doctors of chiropractic score highest in all of these areas.

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