

Back pain is a very common problem. Nearly everyone will have trouble with their backs at least once in their life. Michael Jackson had chronic back problems and his abuse of drugs to manage his pain may be related to his early death.

Many people believe that technology and aggressive treatment is the answer to their back problems. They believe that they need MRI's and CAT scans to diagnose their problems. They believe that spinal injections or surgery will solve their problems.

The fact is that there is little scientific evidence that these procedures have any significant benefit, even though they do have significant cost. A recent paper published in one of the most respected journals in the spine care field reviewed the known effectiveness of a variety of high tech spine care procedures.

Discography is a diagnostic procedure that was once considered to be promising for identifying the cause of back pain. Unfortunately it hasn't been shown to be effective.

Disc replacement is a procedure where an artificial disc is implanted in the spine. For low back pain, little research has been done to support the use of this new procedure.

Epidural steroid injections are currently a very popular treatment approach. This recent review of the current literature found that the evidence for the value of this procedure is inconsistent. Anticipated benefits are moderate and short lived. There are no long term benefits. Since this is still a commonly recommended procedure, many physicians are probably unaware of this research.

Many people consider surgery to be the final answer to their problems. The research shows that surgery provides only moderate benefits. The benefits also fade with time. The research also found that conservative, non-surgical treatment will often provide the same benefit with less risk and expense.

Technology is a wonderful tool, but so far, when it comes to treating back pain, it seems that low tech methods of treatment like exercise and chiropractic care are superior to most high tech procedures that have been developed at this point, especially when the factors of lower risk and lower cost are taken into account.