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“Vertiflex Improves Quality of Life in Military Veterans Suffering from Low Back and Leg Pain”

Objectives: Lumbar interspinous process decompression (IPD) has been in use to treat patients with lumbar spinal stenosis (LSS) since the 1980’s. Vertiflex, a minimally invasive IPD procedure which inserts a small spacer between the vertebrae, is a FDA approved treatment that has been used to treat United States military veterans suffering from LSS. Our study aims to confirm that the Vertiflex procedure has successfully improved the quality of life through comparing pre-operative and post-operative surveys provided to the patients.

Methods: Patients were given the SF-12v2 health survey at consistent time points: Pre-operation, 1 week post-op, 1 month post-op, 3 months post-op, 6 months post-op, and 1 year post-op. 16 patients have been included in the study to date. The SF-12v2 measures 8 total domains which are combined to provide the patients Mental Component Summary (MCS) and Physical Component Summary (PCS) as indicators of quality of life. These scores are measured on a 100-point scale, with a score of 50 indicating the United States population mean score, and each 10-point increment indicating a change of one standard deviation in quality of life. Additionally, patients were asked whether they would recommend Vertiflex to peers with similar symptoms to their own.

Results: 8 of the 13 patients (61.5%) that have been asked so far have recommended Vertiflex to a peer, while one patient remains undecided. For the 8 patients who completed one-year surveys at this point in time, the MCS was found to increase by 10.3 points, showing that on average these patients MCS increased by more than one standard deviation when compared to the United States population average. The average PCS of the 8 patients was found to have increased by 2.76 points. Of the 13 patients who have completed surveys 6 months after their operation, the MCS was found to have increased on average by 5.67 points, and the PCS was found to have increased by 1.17 points.

Conclusion: Vertiflex has been found to increase the quality of life for veterans treated at the New Orleans VA Medical Center as measured by the mean increase in MCS one year post-operatively compared to their pre-operative scores.