

Key Questions

Lumbar Fusion & Discography

Background:

An evaluation of the strength of evidence for the safety and efficacy of lumbar fusion for the treatment of degenerative disc disease (DDD) associated with chronic low back pain.

Key Questions:

Part I – Lumbar fusion surgery and nonsurgical treatments for chronic lumbar back pain

- 1) Does lumbar fusion surgery reduce pain and improve functional status/quality of life more effectively than nonsurgical treatments?
- 2) What are the rates of adverse events (perioperative, long-term events, and reoperations) for lumbar fusion surgery and nonsurgical treatments?
- 3) What patient characteristics (i.e., workers' compensation population, patients with chronic pain, psychological distress, and age-groups) are associated with differences in the benefits and adverse events of lumbar fusion surgery?

Part II – Role of discography prior to lumbar fusion surgery

- 1) In patients being considered for lumbar fusion surgery, what is the reliability of discography?
 - a. Test-retest reliability
 - b. Inter-reader reliability
- 2) In patients undergoing lumbar fusion surgery, do the results of pre-surgical discography predict the degree of pain reduction or improvement in functional status/quality of life after lumbar fusion surgery?
- 3) In patients being considered for lumbar fusion surgery, do patients who receive discography that influences the treatment choice have better treatment outcomes than patients who do not receive discography?