

How to select your spine doctor



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A diagnosis of a spinal problem of any kind can be a very stressful experience for a patient. The idea of having surgery on the spine carries with it worries, perhaps more intense than surgery in other areas. Therefore, choosing the right surgeon becomes an even more important factor. Many patients will begin with the trusted family doctor for a recommendation; that's often a good choice. Yet, even with that endorsement, further research into the person performing surgery on one's spine always is a good idea. The more information gathered, the more confident an individual can be in the choice he or she makes.

Dr. Daveed D. Frazier, medical director of **New York City Spine Surgery PLLC**, says the surgeon's level of experience and effort expended in keeping up with evolving techniques are important factors in choosing your surgeon. At New York City Spine Surgery PLLC, many spine disorders are treated without surgery. However, if surgical intervention becomes necessary, the physicians deliver the most advanced minimally invasive procedures and treatment options available. This might include laser spine surgery, minimally invasive lumbar or cervical spine fusions, microscopic herniated disc surgery or less invasive surgery for spinal stenosis.

"When you choose any surgeon, it is difficult to find out the quality of that surgeon," Dr. Frazier says. "A patient needs to ask questions. Know how to determine who is the right surgeon for your case." First, he points out that it is not rude or insulting to interview a surgeon. Patients have choices to make, and the person being selected to do the surgery can have a profound impact on the patient's life.

Knowing as much as possible and being an educated consumer is optimum, he notes.

"You interview a doctor like anyone else. You can make the decision based upon several factors, including the places the surgeons have trained," Dr. Frazier says. "It's important that the surgeon be board-certified, which means the surgeon has reached a level of expertise recognized by his peers. Typically, board certification must be renewed every 10 years to ensure that the surgeon is keeping up with all the new techniques and information."

Dr. Frazier suggests asking each surgeon how many times she or he has done the procedure in question. It is important, he says, that the technical skills of the doctor are sound and that he/she is experienced, but these are not the only factors a patient should consider. "Go to a physician who not only is capable of performing the procedure, but also is capable of communicating with you," he says. "The surgeon should be able to reasonably explain what he or she is going to do to you, and you should be able to ask questions."

Even after the diagnosis, it is not unreasonable to go to more than one doctor for confirmation and information, Dr. Frazier says.

"When dealing with spine surgery, many people seek a second opinion," he says. "If you are uneasy with your initial surgeon, you should do that. It's very important to be confident. When you injure your knee, the downside of a bad arthroscopic surgery is much different than the downside of bad spine surgery." Dr. Frazier also notes that it's important to know the surgeon's level of practice; that is, how long he or she has been doing spinal surgery. "You should also ask how the physician stays up to date on current topics," he notes.

New York City Spine Surgery PLLC has offices in *Morristown, N.J., and in New York City.*

- Jeffrey Cohen



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