



Benjamin H. Venger, M.D., F.A.C.S.
William D. Smith, M.D.
John A. Anson, M.D., F.A.C.S.
Derek A. Duke, M.D.
Jason E. Garber, M.D.
Michael E. Seiff, M.D.
James S. Forage, M.D.
Stuart S. Kaplan, M.D.

Western Neurosurgery Review

A newsletter for referring physicians

Spring 2005

James S. Forage, M.D. **Neurosurgeon**



Dr. Forage received two undergraduate degrees at the University of Arizona, Tucson and graduated *Summa cum laude* with Honors. He went onto receive his doctorate of medicine at the Washington University, St. Louis. During his residency training at UCLA Medical Center, Dr. Forage developed an extensive clinical understanding and surgical expertise in the treatment of degenerative and traumatic disorders of the cervical, thoracic, lumbar and sacral spine; as well as disorders and diseases of the brain and peripheral nervous system. Dr. Forage was also the Neurosurgical and Spine Fellow at Barrows Neurological Institute, an internationally renowned medical center. Prior to joining our practice, Dr. Forage was the head of spine surgery at Loma Linda University, CA. *More information about Dr. James Forage is located on page 7.*

Trigeminal Neuralgia

Trigeminal Neuralgia (TN), also known as “Tic Douloureux”, is a condition that affects the trigeminal nerve which is one of the largest nerves in the head. TN is characterized by intermittent, shooting pain in the face. The most common cause of TN is an enlarged looping artery or vein pressing on the trigeminal nerve at the base of the brain. TN occurs when an artery or vein moves and presses on the nerve to the face between where it exits the brain and where it enters the base of the skull. The pressure stimulates the fibers in the nerve which causes them to fire and the brain to perceive pain. The trigeminal nerve is responsible for sending impulses of pressure, touch, pain and temperature to the

brain from the face, gums, jaw, forehead and around the eyes. Some other less frequent causes are multiple sclerosis or a brain tumor, both of which can usually be identified by MRI scan.

Trigeminal Neuralgia is also known as “Tic Douloureux”. It is characterized by intermittent, shooting pain in the face.

TN is found to be much more common in women than in men and can occur at any age, but seems to rarely affect anyone younger than 50. The attacks of pain, which may be triggered by simply talking or even chewing, may last several seconds and may be repetitious in nature. TN sometimes seems to also be brought on by a tooth extraction. Many patients report that pain emerged spontaneously out of nowhere one day. Studies have shown that the attacks may come and go throughout the day and may last for several days, week or even months; however, they may also go into spontaneous remission for months or years.

Physicians and dentists do not believe that dental work can be a cause of TN even though patients seem to believe that, for example, a tooth extraction caused TN. The disorder was likely present and dental work brought about coincidental symptoms. Patients feel pain along the upper or lower jaw and assume they have a dental abscess. Many patients return to their dentist for additional procedures to help alleviate the pain; however, when the pain persists, the patient and dentist finally realize the problem is not dental.

More common in women than in men. Physicians and dentists do not believe that dental work can be a cause of TN even though patients seem to believe that. The disorder was likely present and dental work brought about coincidental symptoms.

Medical Treatments for Trigeminal Neuralgia

In general, the first line of treatment is usually medications. Medications tend to initially be effective for quite a number of patients; however, over a period of time, their effectiveness may diminish. During all phases of medical treatment, patients need to maintain good communication with their physicians so they can monitor their medication and the type of response they are obtaining. The patient must keep in mind that taking medications irregularly is not effective; it is very important they maintain a therapeutic blood level of medication for effective pain relief. Patients must also have a clear understanding that abrupt withdrawal of medications can cause serious side effects.

Medications tend to initially be effective for quite a number of patients; however, over a period of time, their effectiveness may diminish. During all phases of medical treatment, patients need to maintain good communication with their physicians so they can monitor their medication and the type of response they are obtaining.

The primary medication used to treat TN carbamazepine. It slows down the function of the irritated nerve and consequently relieves the pain. Many patients tend to find significant or total relief. Initial relief is quickly achieved that many physicians consider its use as a means to confirm the diagnosis of TN. The medication is introduced slowly and increased to a level where the patient is pain-free or side effects occur. Carbamazepine is available as Tegretol. A newer medication is oxcarbazepine which is available as Trileptal. Extended release carbamazepine is available as Carbatrol and Tegretol XR. While on medication for TN, patients are monitored routinely and undergo blood tests to ensure that the drug levels remain safe and that the patient does not develop blood disorders. Analgesics such as aspirin and ibuprofen are generally not effective against TN.

The primary medication used to treat TN carbamazepine.

Some patients may require a relatively high dose to alleviate the pain; however, sometimes side effects tend to occur at high doses. Some side effects include blurred vision, drowsiness and memory and balance problems.

Medications are used as long as the pain is controlled and the side effects do not interfere with a patient's activities. When medication is no longer effective, patients will eventually require surgery.

Surgical Treatments for Trigeminal Neuralgia

Usually medications are the first step of treatment for TN; however, often that is not a permanent solution. When this happens, the patient may be suggested to consult a neurosurgeon. Fortunately, there are several neurosurgical procedures available.

What type of surgery to choose from seems like a dilemma for some patients. No one surgical procedure is best for everyone and each procedure varies in its effectiveness.

What's New?

Western Regional Center for Brain and Spine Surgery would like to announce the addition of two Physician Assistants:



R. Monty Cary, PA-C, M.Ed

Mr. Cary has been a physician assistant for over 30 years and has worked in General and Vascular Surgery, Occupational Medicine, Emergency Medicine and Clinical Administration. He is a 1975 graduate of the Alderson-Broaddus College Physician Assistant Program and a 1987 graduate of The Pennsylvania State University, Penn State, with a Master's Degree in Education and Health Education.

Mr. Cary has been active in both the clinical and educational aspect of the medical profession. After

obtaining his Master's Degree from Pennsylvania State University, he held an Adjunct Faculty position at Penn State from 1987 to 1994 in the Department of Continuing Education and the Department of Health and Community Services at the Milton S. Hershey Medical Center. Since 1998 Mr. Cary has held an Adjunct Faculty position at the Community College of Southern Nevada in the Department of Health Information Technology and the Department of Biology.

Mr. Cary is a retired Major from the United States Air Force Guard and Reserve program. He has traveled world wide with medical units that were involved in humanitarian to combat missions. He last served with the 193rd Special Operations Wing, "The Most Active Guard Unit In The World".

Mr. Cary has been called upon to provide information to some of the most prestigious Law Firms in the United States. His current interest is in the field of Medical Technical Advisor to the film, movie and television industry.

Mr. Cary is our office based physician assistant and sees our post operative patients.



Patrick Davis, PA-C

Mr. Davis has resided in Southern Nevada most of his life. His family moved to Las Vegas in the early 70's when he was a child. He graduated from High School in Boulder City and received an Associate Degree with Honors from the Community College of Southern Nevada.

Mr. Davis spent 16 years in the United States Naval Reserve as a Corpsman. He trained as a Surgical Technologist at California Paramedic and Technical College in Long Beach, CA. he became a Nationally Certified Surgical Technologist and has worked in the operating room first assisting in surgery.

Mr. Davis graduated from the University of Washington School of Medicine Physician Assistant training program in 2002. He practiced in an Orthopaedic practice before joining Western Regional Center for Brain and Spine Surgery.

Mr. Davis has spent the last two years involved in working with Spine injuries at the Level One Trauma Center at UMC.

Mr. Davis is a member of the American Academy of Physician Assistants, the Nevada Academy of Physician Assistants and currently sits on the board for the Allied Health Committee at UMC.

Mr. Davis is one of our hospital based Physician Assistants. He covers periodic night and weekend call with the neurosurgeons and occasionally sees post operative patients in the office.

HOSPITAL BASED PHYSICIAN ASSISTANTS

Joseph A. DeLappi, PA-C

Mr. DeLappi was born and raised in Scranton, Pennsylvania. He received a B.S. in Biology from the University of Scranton and then went on to receive a Bachelor of Science degree in Physician Assistant Studies from Pennsylvania College of Technology.

Michael B. Houtz, PA-C

Mr. Houtz was born and raised in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. He graduated with a B.S.B.A. from the University of Missouri-Columbia and went on to receive his MBA in Finance from DePaul University. During the years that followed his acquisition of his MBA, Mr. Houtz attended Midwestern University and received a Bachelor of Medical Science in Physician Assistant Studies.

Douglas T. Young, PA-C, Ph.D.

Mr. Young was born in North Kingston, Rhode Island and raised in Houston, Texas. He graduated with an Associate of Arts Degree from San Jacinto College and then received his B.S. from the University of Houston. He then went on to receive two degrees from the Western University of Health Sciences, his Physician Assistant and Master of Science Degree. From there he went on to receive his Doctor of Philosophy from Kennedy-Western University. Mr. Young is also an instructor of Human Pathophysiology at the Community College of Southern Nevada. Currently Mr. Young is a Doctoral student at Nova South Eastern University. Upon graduation he will receive his second Doctorate of Education Degree in Managerial Leadership.

New Online Referral Forms can expedite your referrals!

Go online to www.BrainAndSpineOnLine.com, click on the Referral Form button, fill out the online form, then click the submit button. The information will be sent directly to our Referral Specialists to immediately start processing your referral.

Visit our Website

Please visit our newly updated website located at www.BrainAndSpineOnLine.com to learn more about our practice.

On our website, you will find information regarding our practice including office hours and locations, information on how to schedule an appointment, new patient paperwork, contact and insurance information, office policies, and much more.

In addition, learn more about our physicians and medical staff, about neurosurgery, as well as many of the more common symptoms and conditions that our physicians treat.

Keeping In Touch

At Western Regional Center for Brain and Spine Surgery we are constantly expanding to better serve the needs of our patients and referring physicians. While expansion allows us to see patients in a more timely manner and closer to their homes, we realize that keeping track of who and where we are can be a confusing proposition. For this reason, we have compiled the addresses of all our offices.

Nevada Clinics

Las Vegas Main Office

3061 S. Maryland Pkwy, #200

Phone: 702-737-1948

Toll Free: 800-334-0878

Fax: 702-737-7195

New Patients Referrals Fax: 702-735-1169

**New Patient Appointments for all physicians
are scheduled through our main office on
Maryland Parkway**

Henderson Main Office

861 Coronado Ctr Dr, #200

Phone: 702-896-0940

All Faxes: 702-896-6173

MountainView

Professional Med. Center

3150 N. Tenaya Way, #340

Spring Valley

5495 S. Rainbow Blvd, #101A

Laughlin

UMC QuickCare

150 Bruce Woodbury Dr.

Mesquite

Mesq. Med. Associates

1301 Bertha Howe Ave, #1

Arizona Clinics

Lake Havasu City

1810 Mesquite Ave, #B

Bullhead City

2000 HWY 95, #210

Kingman

Professional Medical Center

1739 Beverly Ave, #102 & 106

Utah Clinic

St. George

Skyline Building

301 North 200 East, #2C and #2A

Cedar City

166 West 1325 North, #150

Questions & Answers

These questions were gathered from referring physicians, their office staffs and our patients.

1. Do you accept pediatric patients as part of your practice?

Yes. In fact our practice performs the majority of pediatric neurosurgery in southern Nevada and surrounding communities. Dr. Stuart Kaplan joined our group in 2004 and performed a Pediatric Fellowship at St. Louis Children's Hospital.

2. Do you perform spine surgery as well as intracranial procedures?

Yes, we have one of the busiest and diverse spine practices in southern Nevada. Our physicians not only evaluate acute and degenerative spine conditions, but also perform complex spinal reconstructive procedures in both adults and pediatric patients. Our practice directs the neuro/spine injury program at the only Level 1 Trauma Center in southern Nevada. We also routinely treat tumor and vascular disease within the spinal cord itself.

3. At which of the Las Vegas hospitals are your physicians on staff?

All of our physicians have privileges at Sunrise, UMC, Desert Springs, Valley, MountainView, Summerlin, Spring Valley, Southern Hills, St. Rose DeLima and Siena Hospitals.

4. At which hospitals will your physicians perform surgery?

Our physicians perform surgery at Sunrise, UMC, Desert Springs, Valley, MountainView and St. Rose Siena.

5. Are any of the physicians on hospital medical staffs outside of Las Vegas?

We are also part of the medical staff of Western Arizona Regional Medical Center (Bullhead City, AZ), Kingman Regional Medical Center (Kingman, AZ), Havasu Regional Medical Center (Lake Havasu City, AZ) and Dixie Regional Medical Center (St. George, UT). Dr. Venger has privileges at Western Arizona Regional Medical Center, Kingman Regional Medical Center, Havasu Regional Medical Center and Dixie Regional Medical Center. Dr. Anson has privileges at Havasu Regional Medical Center in Lake Havasu City, AZ.

6. Prior to scheduling an appointment, does one of the physicians need to review any records or radiology reports?

The more information our physicians have to review prior to evaluating a patient, the more efficiently we can determine what is necessary to arrive at a correct diagnosis. Generally, we ask that records be sent, if possible, to help facilitate this.

7. Do patients need to bring their actual films with them to their scheduled appointment?

Yes. Before reaching a decision to recommend surgery, we need to personally review all pertinent radiology studies. For this reason, if patients arrive without their actual films, their appointments may need to be rescheduled.

8. Do you accept worker's compensation?

Yes. We accept many out-of-state plans including those in Arizona, Utah and California.

**James S. Forage, MD
Curriculum Vitae**

Fellowship

- Barrow Neurological Institute, Phoenix, AZ
 - Spine Fellowship, 2002 - 2003

Residency

- UCLA Medical Center, Los Angeles, CA
 - Residency, Neurological Surgery, 1996 - 2002

Internship

- UCLA Medical Center, Los Angeles, CA
 - Internship, Neurological Surgery, 1996 – 1997

Medical School

- Washington University, St. Louis, MO
 - Doctorate of Medicine, 1996

College

- University of Arizona, Tucson, AZ
 - B.S. Biochemistry – *Summa cum laude* with Honors, 1992
 - B.A. Spanish – *Summa cum laude* with Honors, 1992

Honors and Awards

- *Alpha Omega Alpha* Research Grant
- *Phi Beta Kappa*
- National Merit Scholar
- Most Outstanding Graduate, Faculty of Science, May 1992
- Deans List 1989, 1990, 1991, 1992