



American
Association of
Neurological
Surgeons

5550 Meadowbrook Drive
Rolling Meadows, IL 60008

Member Services: 888.566.AANS
Phone: 847.378.0500
Fax: 847.378.0600
Web: www.AANS.org

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frederickboop@gmail.com

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August 8, 2016

Editor, The New York Times
620 Eighth Avenue
New York, NY 10018

Dear Editor:

We were disappointed to read the Aug. 3, 2016, article by Gina Colata, "Why 'Useless' Surgery Is Still Popular," which does your readers and the public a disservice. The article inappropriately compares two widely different procedures in an attempt to vilify two surgical techniques that, when done for the right indications, clearly have proven track records of providing marked improvement in patients' quality of life. The author's conclusion that spine surgery was no better than alternative nonsurgical treatments is misleading and neglects to recognize several seminal randomized controlled clinical trials — including the SPORT study — demonstrating the efficacy of spine surgery.

The American Association of Neurological Surgeons, and its Quality Outcomes Database (QOD), is leading the way to evaluate real-world clinical practice to improve the delivery of quality patient-centered care. For example, Spine Surgery QOD is the largest spine registry in North America. Using aggregated patient-reported outcomes data for lumbar surgery for degenerative spine diseases from patients nationwide, we are developing a "calculator" to help predict individualized patient outcomes. Shared-decision making tools such as this will help prevent ineffective care before it occurs, by providing patients with the best information available so they can decide if surgery is right for them.

Sincerely,

Frederick A. Boop, MD, President
American Association of Neurological Surgeons