

Turning their back to pain

As cases of backaches increase, doctors encourage patients to opt for newer, minimal-invasive procedures to cure the afflicted at an early stage of the problem

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When 62-year-old Ramesh Nemchand Shah's severe lower back pain gradually spread to his right leg and then radiated to his left limb, the resident of Madagascar approached a few local doctors there — but the pain persisted. Finally, he took to the Internet and researched his condition — and decided to come to Pune, where his daughter is based, to seek advice from doctors here. He was diagnosed with a prolapsed disc (slipped disc), for which he was reluctant to undergo open spine surgery. But when told the nerve compression could be fixed without a major surgery, he was relieved. "I lost a close 40-year-old relative last year to open spine surgery, another relative was paralysed 20 years ago while undergoing the same procedure, so I was very nervous. But doctors said they will perform a minimal invasive operation with no muscle cutting. I am infinitely thankful," Shah said.

Shah is not alone. An increasing number of professionals from the city's IT sector, as well as cushy corporate desk jobs, are walking up to physicians and complaining of spinal aches and pains, but are reluctant to address the problem with invasive or risky surgeries. Now, the relatively new technique of percutaneous endoscopic lumbar discectomy (PELD) or stitchless spine surgery, is being conducted by city doctors without cutting through muscle and bone. Patients suffering from slipped discs, lower back pains due to nerve compression, as well as sciatica can get rid of their pain with the stitchless PELD spine surgery. One gets discharged from the hospital within 24 hours, thereby leading to cost reduction as well.

Dr Rajesh Parasnis, spine surgeon

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DR JAYDEV PANCHWAGH
Neurosurgeon, Deenanath
Mangeshkar Hospital



I was nervous about an open spine surgery, but thankful when doctors said they would perform a minimal invasive operation



RAMESH NEMCHAND SHAH
Patient

at the Oyster & Pearl Hospital, said, "Around 65 per cent of my patients are young and from the IT sector. The minimal invasive surgery is most welcome as they can get back to work within 24 hours. This advanced technique incorporates miniature endoscopy, radiofrequency (RF) waves and laser techniques." Dr Jaydev Panchwagh, neurosurgeon at the Deenanath Mangeshkar Hospital, told *Mirror*, "This new technique is extremely beneficial. Irrational fears in the minds of patients cause them to suffer pain and only come to us in advanced stages. Slipped discs if ignored, can cause chronic backpains, sciatica and neurogenic claudications, not to mention irreversible nerve damage."

While the technique has been available for more than six years, a

lack of awareness and availability of high-end machines in hospitals has prevented the service from reaching the masses. Several patients tend to consult doctors only when the condition is at an advanced stage — and this technique is only effective when the damage has not spread, for which open surgery is needed. City-based orthopaedic surgeon Padmabhushan Dr K H Sancheti confirmed to *Mirror* that PELD is suitable only for milder problems. "For major problems, one would have to opt for conventional open spine surgery," he said.

