# Frequency Of Minimally Invasive Lumbar Spinal Fusion Surgery Grows

With the recent launch of the Neurosurgical Spine Program at Saint Louis University Hospital's Center for Cerebrovascular and Skull Base Surgery, the hospital has seen a dramatic increase in the number of minimally-invasive spinal procedures, including lumbar spinal fusion surgery. Designed to stop the motion at a painful vertebral segment, this procedure is traditionally performed via a large incision on the back, stripping muscles away from the spine.

Kurt M. Eichholz, M.D., a neurosurgeon at SLU Hospital and director of the hospital's Neurosurgery Spine Program, recently performed the procedure on lumbar segments L4 and L5 via a 1" incision on a 54-year-old male patient who had been experiencing constant back and leg pain. The patient was found to have a spondylolisthesis, or slip of L4 on L5. In this condition, the L4 vertebral body is offset by approximately 25 percent on the L5 vertebral body, causing compression of the nerve roots.

Through a small incision just off the midline of the spine, Dr. Eichholz removed the joint and disc between L4 and L5, and placed a graft filled with Mr. Weaver's own bone into the disc space. Once the graft was in the proper position, pedicle screws were placed into L4 and L5 to hold the segment rigid while the bone fuses. Mr. Weaver was discharged two days after surgery and returned to work one week later. He has not experienced any immediate postoperative complications, and quickly resumed all of his normal activities, including some light jogging, nine weeks after surgery.

Source: Saint Louis University Hospital

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