Less-Invasive Surgery Markedly Eases Patients' Back Pain, Restores Mobility

It causes extreme pain, numbness, or tingling in the lower back, legs or buttocks, limiting a person's ability to walk or even stand for long periods of time. The reality is that lumbar spinal stenosis – a narrowing of the lower spinal canal – affects an estimated 1.5 million Americans.

Now comes a treatment which eases the pain and other conditions associated with spinal stenosis and physicians at Franciscan St. Francis Health have been using it to help their patients. It's called *mild®* [1] (minimally invasive lumbar decompression), an outpatient procedure which usually takes less than an hour and enables patients to resume light activities within a few days.

"The *mild* procedure is for patients who are too old or too sick for more open surgery, or who want to try something less invasive first," said Robert Prince, MD, a spine expert with Franciscan Physician Network Spine Specialists [2]. "While traditional surgery is effective, it requires general anesthesia, lengthier hospital stays and poses a higher risk of complications."

Prince is one of the few physicians in Indiana and among only a few nationally who are certified to perform *mild*, which was developed by the California-based Vertos Medical Inc [3].

Lumbar spinal stenosis generally manifests in people 50 years and older, and the likelihood of developing it increases as they age. Non-surgical treatments include a regimen of specialized exercise, activity modification and cortisone injections, the latter of which can only temporarily reduce symptoms.

Here's how *mild* works: A small incision is made in the affected area and then specialized imagery and tools are used to remove excess small pieces of bone and ligament tissue. This restores space in the spinal canal and decreases compression of the nerves. No general anesthesia, implants, or stitches are necessary with this procedure.

A study [4] conducted at the Cleveland Clinic found that *mild* is both effective and efficient and offers most patients a new alternative. After monitoring 40 patients over a one-year period, researchers found that standing time for *mild* patients increased on average from eight minutes to nearly an hour and that the patients' average walking distance increased from 246 feet to nearly three quarters of a mile.

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[1] http://www.mildprocedure.com/
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