



Preface
Chronic low back pain: issues and management, part I



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Guest Editors

Rene Descartes, the noted French philosopher and mathematician, proposed one of the original theories of pain in the 16th century. He proposed that the intensity of pain is directly related to the amount of tissue injury. For example, pricking one's finger with a needle would produce minimal pain, while sawing one's hand off with a knife would cause more tissue injury and be more painful.

This "specificity theory" is generally accurate when applied to acute injuries and the associated pain. However, chronic pain is different; it may be less severe than acute pain, but it is nonetheless quite debilitating. An ongoing scientific effort to understand the injury-related mechanisms of pain is required, as are endeavors to disseminate the state-of-the-art to treat chronic pain.

It is estimated that over \$80 billion is spent in the United States alone to address chronic back pain each year, and the cost is growing. Eight out of 10 people will have back pain at some time during their lives. Progressive back pain is more likely to occur between the ages of 30 to 50, the productive period of most people's lives.

This issue of the *Orthopedic Clinics of North America* is dedicated to issues and management of chronic low back pain. An overview of the current understanding of diagnosis and treatment of chronic low back pain problems is provided. Emphasis is placed on the basic science, diagnosis, outcome

assessment, and surgical options, as well as rehabilitation perspectives for the management of this debilitating condition.

We would like to take this opportunity to congratulate and thank each of our contributing authors for their generous efforts in making this issue a success given the short time frame that was provided to them. It was our aim to present a wide variety of topics on chronic low back pain, and each author has successfully provided a scientific compilation that is both timely and relevant. The dedication and perseverance of Deb Dellapena at W.B. Saunders and Vanessa Thomas at the Department of Orthopaedic Surgery, St. George Hospital, University of New South Wales, have made developing this issue an absolute pleasure.

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