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KMC Neurosurgeon implants new technology in patient's spine

COEUR d'ALENE – One of Kootenai Medical Center's neurosurgeons once again brings leading-edge technology to people suffering with lower lumbar pain.

Dr. Jeffrey Larson is among the first spine surgeons throughout the country certified to use the Dynesys Spinal System, which stabilizes the spine without the traditional form of spinal fusion.

The new system is designed to relieve lower back and leg pain resulting from some of the most common conditions of the spine, including spondylolisthesis or "slipped disc," and spinal stenosis – a condition where compression of the nerves can produce pain, numbness and tingling in the legs.

"About 18,000 of these procedures have been done in Europe," said Dr. Larson. "It's another nice option for some patients with back pain."

For many years, the main surgical solution has been lumbar spinal fusion surgery, which means the affected discs are removed and the vertebral segments are fused together. In time, bone grows between the vertebrae – stopping any motion in the area.

The device uses titanium alloy screws and external spacers made of flexible plastic tubing surrounding a nylon-like cord to stabilize the affected lumbar region while preserving the natural anatomy of the spine. The push-pull relationship between the spacers and the tubing stabilizes the spinal segments without causing undue pressure to other areas of the spine.

“The criticism of typical lumbar fusion is it causes pressure in other areas,” Larson said. “It (Dynesys System) dissipates the pressure across the injured area.”

Kootenai Medical Center leads the way when introducing new technology to patients suffering from degenerative disc disease. In December 2004, Dr. Larson completed the first artificial disc replacement in the Northwest – using the CHARITÉ Artificial Disc, which preserves motion and increases flexibility.

“It’s an exciting time for patients contemplating spinal surgery, because KMC offers both traditional and leading-edge technology,” said Carmen Brochu, KMC’s vice president of patient care services. “We are making great progress in treating chronic spinal pain.”

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Kootenai Medical Center is a 246-bed community-owned hospital providing a full range of healthcare services for the people of North Idaho. Since 1967, KMC has served North Idaho with heart and compassion, providing quality medical services to patients, regardless of their ability to pay. From emergency medicine and intensive care to cardiac services and cancer treatment, KMC offers complete clinical services and patient support. Kootenai Medical Center’s services include:

- North Idaho Cancer Center
- North Idaho Heart Center
- KMC Birthing Center
- North Idaho Imaging Center
- North Idaho MRI
- KMC’s McGrane Center for Rehabilitation and Therapeutic Care
- Kootenai Rehabilitation Center
- Alpha Medical Laboratory
- KMC Health Park, Post Falls
- Radiation Therapy of North Idaho
- Kootenai Outpatient Surgery
- KMC Walden House
- KMC Health Resource Center