

The Functional Anaesthetic Discogram: Comparison of the Results of a Novel Technique to that of Provocative Discography in a Group of Patients with Chronic Low Back Pain

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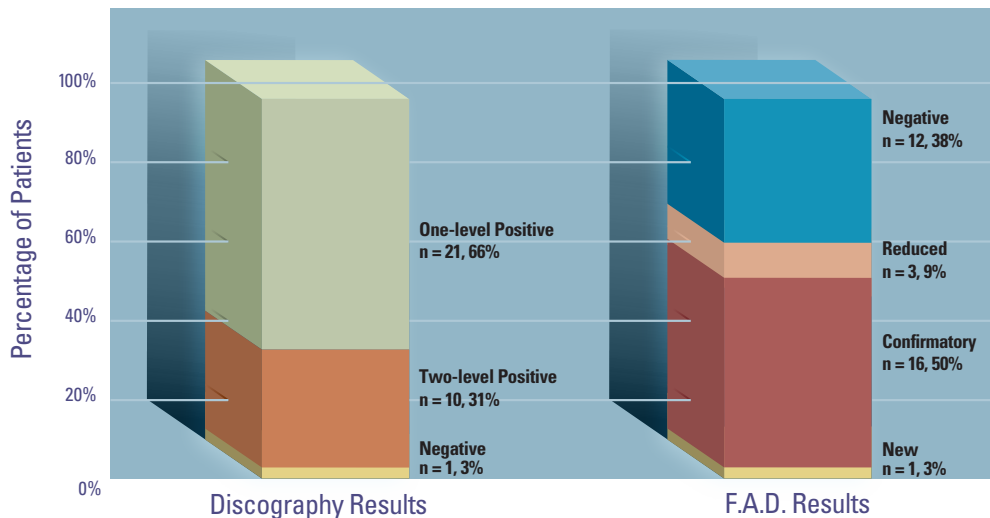
Introduction: We have designed a new diagnostic test, the Functional Anaesthetic Discogram (F.A.D.). We report on the results of the test in 32 patients (16F, 16M) with chronic low back pain compared to standard provocative discography, and the results of lumbar fusion in patients selected in this manner.

Methods: Pre-study VAS, Oswestry and DRAM scales were recorded; during the test, VAS scales, pain concordancy and pressurization data were recorded. Post-operative VAS and Oswestry scores were recorded, with 3-month minimum follow-up. A standard provocative discogram was performed, and a catheter was placed into discs considered positive by standard criteria. Patients were asked to perform an activity that would ordinarily cause their typical pain. An injection of 0.7 cc of 4% lidocaine or normal saline was then performed in a double-blinded fashion. VAS scores were recorded for twenty minutes, and the test was then repeated until all discs were tested with both normal saline and anaesthetic.

Results: 50% had confirmatory findings on the F.A.D. test. 38% had positive provocative discograms that were negative on F.A.D. testing. One patient had a negative provocative discogram, and yet pain relief on the F.A.D. 12 patients from the study have undergone fusion and have been followed for at least 3 months (3 – 12 mo). The mean pre-operative Oswestry score was 58.5; mean post-op was 26.5. The mean pre-op VAS score for back pain was 7.2; mean post-op was 3.1.

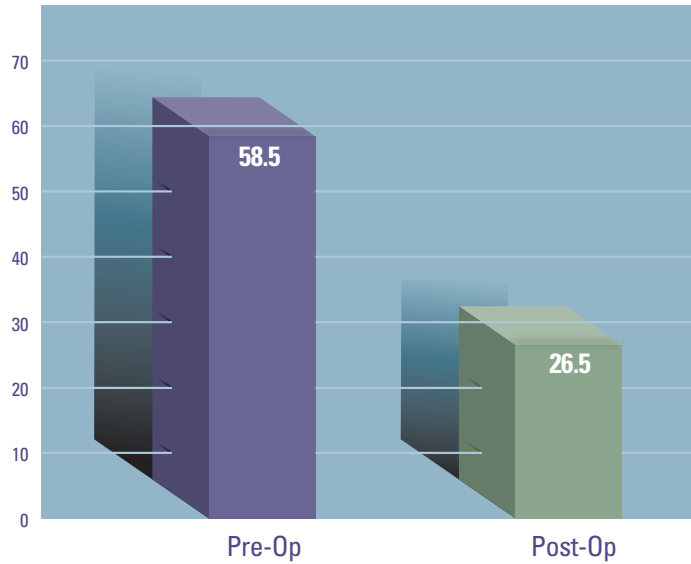
Discography vs. F.A.D.

n = 32



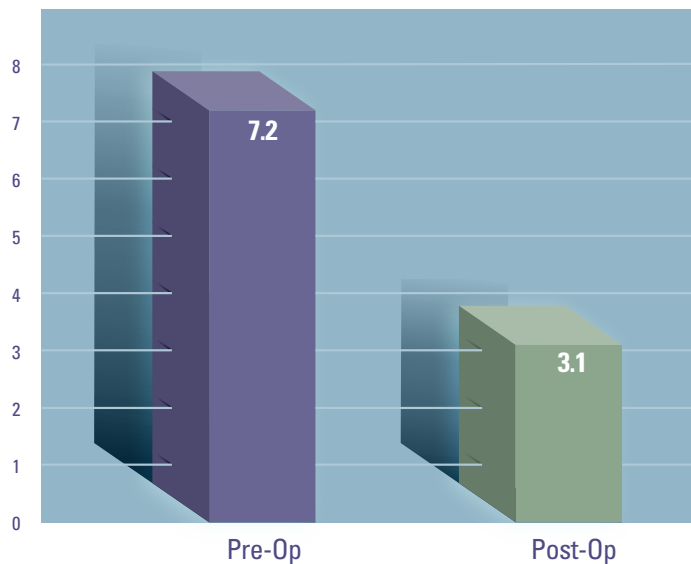
Oswestry Score

n = 12



VAS Score

n = 12



Discussion: This is the first description of a novel technique, which may prove a useful method of establishing the diagnosis of discogenic low back pain. In 50% of the patients reported on here, the results of the F.A.D. test altered the clinical treatment plan. Early post-operative results of patients selected in this manner treated with fusion are very promising.

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