

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF
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American
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Congress of
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October 24, 2022

Edward Dohring, MD, President
North American Spine Society
7075 Veterans Blvd.
Burr Ridge, IL 60527

SUBJECT: NASS Draft Cervical Fusion Coverage Policy Recommendations

Dear Dr. Dohring:

On behalf of the American Association of Neurological Surgeons (AANS), the Congress of Neurological Surgeons (CNS) and the AANS/CNS Joint Section on Disorders of the Spine and Peripheral Nerves, we appreciate the opportunity to comment on the North American Spine Society's Cervical Fusion Draft Coverage Policy Recommendation Revisions. Overall, we found the draft revisions comprehensive.

We have one concern regarding Clinical Criteria #9, Nontraumatic Instability of a Motion Segment. Although translational motion of two millimeters or greater was identified as one of the criteria for instability — as with the patient population suffering from traumatic injuries — instability can be present in the absence of radiographic translation due to the presence of muscle splinting. As such, it would be advisable to add "intractable pain thought to arise from instability" as one of the criteria listed.

Moreover, although the recommendations state under the rationale for item #1 that "Instability remains judged on an individual case-by-case basis," we believe this crucial point should be highlighted for **all** decisions regarding instability.

Again, thank you very much for the opportunity to review these draft policy recommendations. As spine surgeons, we share a common dedication to the best possible care for patients with disorders of the spine. We look forward to collaborating on this and other coverage policy recommendations to provide valuable clinical expertise and guidance to payors and other stakeholders.

Sincerely,

Ann R. Stroink, MD, President
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