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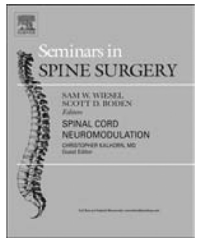

Introduction

It is an understatement to say that the understanding of pathology, diagnosis and effective treatment of spinal pathology can at times be challenging. In addition, optimizing clinical and cost effectiveness of spine care is particularly challenging in today's evolving health care system. Of the many existing spinal pathologies, neuro-compressive disease from lumbar stenosis is among the most commonly encountered and treated. In general, the treatment of lower extremity neurological symptoms from lumbar stenosis is regarded to be among the most successful in spine care. This stands in stark contrast to the treatment of axial back pain symptoms which is much more poorly understood. The surgical treatment of lumbar stenosis was described as early as the 7th century and the same general idea of surgical decompression has persisted to present day. While the treatment of surgical decompression has persisted, alternative approaches to minimize surgical morbidity have been developed. Minimally invasive approaches and indirect decompression represent an alternative method of attempting to achieve decompression of lumbar stenosis. In addition, it is important for the physician to be cognizant of the context of lumbar stenosis. Considerations of preventing iatrogenic instability, pre-existing instability or deformity may drastically affect surgical strategy. This issue reviews not only the pathophysiology and non- operative treatments of lumbar stenosis, but also the potential complexities surrounding surgical treatment.

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