

CENTRAL COAST/VENTURA COUNTY

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**Innovative
Solutions for
Chronic Pain
Sufferers**

Innovative Solutions for Chronic Pain Sufferers

By Susan Cushing

“Pain is inevitable. Suffering is optional.”

— M. Kathleen Casey

FOR PATIENTS OF Advanced Pain Medical Group in West Hills and Conejo Valley, CA, this quote has special significance. By partnering with Boston Scientific, doctors Vimal S. Lala, D.O., M.P.H., and Paul B. Johnson, M.D., provide innovative care to long-time sufferers who have discovered that even if pain is *inevitable*, suffering is *not*!

Enduring chronic pain is not only a physical drain, but it can also be extremely detrimental to an individual's mental health. Ongoing pain can be demoralizing and isolating. According to many experts, it's quite common for patients to develop

symptoms of depression and begin to view themselves as “less than” the person they were prior to the onset of the disease or injury that initiated the pain. Long-term effects on family and other relationships also impact a patient's quality of life.

As interventional spine and pain medicine specialists, Dr. Lala and Dr. Johnson have dedicated themselves to relieving pain by utilizing a multidisciplinary approach.

Dr. Lala explains, “In the past, for instance, if someone was suffering from low back problems they would go to their primary care physician. If the traditional anti-inflammatory medications or physical therapy didn't work, then they would be sent straight to the surgeon. Today, with our specialty, we are the bridge between the primary care physician and the spine surgeon. Patients are managed quite well, and they don't necessarily have



“We use minimally invasive, nonsurgical procedures to minimize their pain,” Dr. Lala says. One of the most effective and innovative surgical procedures now offered by Advanced Pain Medical Group is the Precision Plus™ Spinal Cord Stimulator Implant.

to have spine surgery. Many of them receive significant pain relief with procedures, such as spinal cord stimulation using Precision Plus.”

Customized Care

Though universal, pain is ultimately an intensely personal experience, and everyone associated with Advanced Pain Medical Group is cognizant of this fact. From the moment they first enter the offices, patients can feel the sincere empathy and concern emanating from everyone on staff.

“We treat our patients comprehensively, as human beings, not as their symptoms,” says Dr. Lala. “We’ve found that really getting to know each patient is a vital element in the overall care.”

“We develop a personal relationship with the patient so we can figure out what will work for each patient,” Dr. Johnson elaborates. “There are so many variables and numerous factors when dealing with pain. It’s not just the physical aspects but the emotional, psychological and mental — not to mention the family dynamics that come into play — so it’s really very critical to get to know the patient on an individual basis because what works for one person will not necessarily be appropriate for the next.”

Shared Vision

Passionate about their work, both doctors say they really found their niche during medical school. Mutual respect and admiration grew between the two during their fellowship at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), and as a result they co-founded Advanced Pain Medical Group. Their practice serves as an extension of their shared passion for the highly specialized field of pain management and the myriad opportunities it presents to significantly impact their patients’ lives.

Both doctors are anesthesiologists and pain medicine physicians. Their abundant skills are acknowledged with numerous honors and awards. They were both trained in a formal fellowship at UCLA, which is recognized as the premier pain medicine program in the country. While many other fields of medicine boast numerous board-certified practitioners, there are actually very few board-certified pain management specialists. Dr. Lala and Dr. Johnson hold this distinction. Respected as experts in their field, both doctors are frequently called upon for opinions and comments. In fact, Dr. Lala has been featured on several national news programs, including “Larry King Live,” E-Entertainment Television, Inc., and “CNN Headline News.”

America’s Back

According to the latest data, **low back pain is the No. 2 reason given for why Americans see their doctor**, coming in second only to colds and flu. In fact, low back pain affects more than 100 million Americans each year, which computes to more than half of our population!

Dr. Lala concurs with these statistics. “Billions of dollars are being spent on the treatment of lower back pain and yet that does not mean that the pain is necessarily alleviated. We



SPINAL CORD STIMULATION

Spinal Cord Stimulation (SCS) is a safe and effective therapy that has been used for more than 40 years to help people take control of their chronic pain. The Precision Plus™ SCS System, designed and built by Boston Scientific Neuromodulation, is approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration for adults with chronic intractable pain of the trunk (low back) and/or limbs (legs). For more information, visit www.controlyourpain.com or www.raceagainstpain.com.

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Paul B. Johnson, M.D.



Vimal S. Lala, D.O., M.P.H.

see a tremendous number of patients who express to us, ‘I’ve tried everything,’ and we’re finally able to offer them not only relief from the constant pain, but restore them to an increased functional capacity. We help get them back to work and truly improve their overall quality of life. It’s a wonderful feeling when you see that we have really made a difference — it’s extremely rewarding.”

One of the most effective and innovative surgical procedures now offered by Advanced Pain Medical Group, is the Precision Plus™ Spinal Cord Stimulator Implant. The Boston Scientific Precision Plus system is indicated for patients with chronic intractable pain of the trunk and/or limbs. The system, which features Smoothwave technology, works to interrupt pain impulses before they reach the brain, replacing them with a smooth soothing feeling.

“This is an amazing treatment for many forms of pain,” explains Dr. Johnson. “Essentially, electrical impulses prevent pain signals from being received by the brain. The best candidates for the implant are those who suffer from neuropathic pain or who have failed back surgery and have not found relief through more conservative treatments.”

Russell Ewing is in his 70s and was nearly incapacitated by the ongoing pain. “I was in so much pain. Nothing seemed to help,” he explains. “So, when Dr. Johnson suggested this procedure, I was really ready to try anything. I have to admit, I didn’t hold out much hope. But they did the trial placement for three days and it was just *wonderful!* After being in pain for so long, it was just like heaven!” Ewing had the permanent implant just after the first of the year.

Patient Brendan Gregory reports a similar experience.

He, too, has suffered excruciating and continual back pain. His

pain originated from two bulging discs. After two failed surgeries his pain not only escalated, but he was also losing strength in his right leg. As a single father of a young daughter, his concerns extended beyond his own discomfort to concerns about how he would support his daughter and eventually, whether he’d be able to care for her.

“At this point I decided I needed to change doctors,” he explains. “I had been seeing another pain management specialist, but it seemed that not only was I not getting better, I was actually getting worse. I had lost about 80% of the strength in that leg.”

Gregory had his procedure this past December and says, “The relief was immediate! I couldn’t believe it!”

“Honestly,” he adds with a smile, “I wish I could go to Dr. Lala for all my medical needs. I’ve never been treated better by a physician or their staff in my life. I really feel that we’ve developed a friendship, and I know that I owe him so much. This has been absolutely life altering!”

Advanced Pain Medical Group offers a variety of treatments designed to address virtually any type or level of chronic pain. For more information on treatment options, including Precision Plus by Boston Scientific, please contact Dr. Johnson and Dr. Lala at Advanced Pain Medical Group, 7230 Medical Center Drive, Suite 500, West Hills, CA (818) 348-7246 and 313 S. Moorpark Rd., Thousand Oaks, CA 91361, www.advancedpainmedical.com or Boston Scientific at ControlYourPain.com or 1-866-360-4747. ■

Neither Dr. Lala nor Dr. Johnson receives any consulting or royalty payments from Boston Scientific Neuromodulation.

Boston Scientific Disclaimer:

Indications for Use

Boston Scientific’s Precision Spinal Cord Stimulator System is indicated as an aid in the management of chronic intractable pain of the trunk and/or limbs, including unilateral or bilateral pain associated with failed back surgery syndrome, intractable low back pain and leg pain.

Contraindications

The Precision Spinal Cord Stimulator System is not for patients who are unable to operate the system, have failed trial stimulation by failing to receive effective pain relief, are poor surgical risks or are pregnant.

Warnings

Patients implanted with the Precision Plus Spinal Cord Stimulator

System should not be exposed to MRI. Exposure to MRI may result in dislodgement of the stimulator or leads, heating of the stimulator, severe damage to the stimulator electronics and an uncomfortable or jolting sensation. As a Spinal Cord Stimulation patient, you should not have diathermy as either a treatment for a medical condition or as part of a surgical procedure. Strong electromagnetic fields, such as power generators or theft detection systems, can potentially turn the stimulator off or cause uncomfortable jolting stimulation. The system should not be charged while sleeping.

The Precision Spinal Cord Stimulator System may interfere with the operation of implanted sensing stimulators such as pacemakers or implanted cardiac defibrillators. Advise your physician that you have a spinal cord stimulator before going through with other implantable device therapies so that medical decisions can be made and appropriate safety measures taken.

Patients should not operate motorized vehicles or potentially dangerous machinery with therapeutic stimulation switched “on.”

Your doctor may be able to provide additional information on the Precision Spinal Cord Stimulator System. For a copy of the

Precision Spinal Cord Stimulator System patient handbook, including the indications for use, contraindications, warnings, precautions and side effects, call 1-866-360-4747.

Precision Plus™ by Boston Scientific’s wireless patient remote control with wireless charger and implantable pulse generator with SCS leads.

