

October 25, 2000

The Editor  
*The New York Times*  
229 West 43<sup>rd</sup> Street  
New York, New York 10036-3959

To the Editor:

Re "For Back Pain Sufferers, A Technique Under Study May Offer Help" (Health and Fitness, October 24)

The lack of historical perspective in this article was particularly dismaying, because the pioneer in fiberoptic laser surgery for herniated lumbar disks is Daniel S.J. Choy, MD of Manhattan.

More than a decade ago, Dr. Choy devised the procedure known as "percutaneous laser disk decompression" (PLDD). Like the procedure described, it entails insertion of an introducing needle that is guided to the target disk by fluoroscopic observation. A fiber is passed through the needle. An electrical current, the strength of which Dr. Choy researched and published, burns a hole in the disk. This permits reentry of the gelatinous material that has escaped and is causing pressure on sensory (and sometimes motor) nerves. The only anesthesia is a frozen spot on the skin.

Dr. Choy alone has performed hundreds of these procedures, initially at Lenox Hill Hospital but more recently in his office. Having trained a generation of physicians in the technique, it is now performed throughout the country and the world. Most American insurance carriers have covered it for at least six years. It has been included in major textbooks on back care for at least as long.

As one of the many beneficiaries of this procedure – now without symptoms or physical restrictions for more than six years – I can attest to its efficacy. New Yorkers with herniated intervertebral disks have a proven local source of relief from debilitating pain.

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