

# Getting back on track

The Spine Center can help ease your pain

► **IMAGINE THIS: YOU ARE SEEN BY A NEUROLOGIST FOR TROUBLING BACK PAIN.** Without traveling to another office, you undergo testing to evaluate your problem and consult with a neurosurgeon about possible treatment options.

This fall, Grand Strand Regional



Thomas  
Anderson, MD

Medical Center makes this scenario a reality with the opening of The Spine Center, located at 8170 Rourk St. in Myrtle Beach. "It is important to have a one-stop, full-service facility that patients can come to, whether it is for conservative treatment or surgery," says Thomas Anderson, MD, a neurosurgeon and vice chief of surgery at Grand Strand Regional.



Barbara Sarb, DO

The comprehensive approach used at The Spine Center assures patients the most convenient and fastest path to treatment and healing. Grand Strand Regional neurologist Barbara Sarb, DO, has seen patients in pain who have suffered in silence

for years, unaware that there is a wide range of treatment options available beyond what you can get over the counter. For these patients, who would otherwise have to run from office to office to be treated, The Spine Center offers comprehensive care under one roof. "I think this will also appeal greatly to our senior citizen community, who have retired here and commonly complain of back and neck pain," she says.

## Getting to the root of pain

Back and neck pain can stem from any number of conditions, including pinched nerves, muscle strains, herniated and bulging disks, spinal stenosis (a narrowing of the spinal canal around the nerves), arthritis, degenerative disk disease (the disks between the bones of the spine become more brittle and prone to damage), spinal tumors and spondylolysis (spinal joint instability). In addition to back and neck pain, some spinal problems can cause leg or arm pain, headaches, numbness and tingling, weakness, problems walking and bladder and bowel issues.

Most back and neck pain begins to resolve itself within 72 hours with self-treatment (icing, rest). However, if your pain does not start getting



better or it worsens, it is time to call your physician.

To diagnose problems of the spine, The Spine Center is equipped with imaging tests such as computed tomography (CT) and magnetic resonance imaging (MRI). Additional studies such as electromyography (EMG), which studies the functioning of nerves and looks for damage, and evoked potential studies, which analyze the pathway between the brain and the arms and legs, also can be performed, Dr. Sarb says.

## Treating the spectrum

Depending on the diagnosis, a number of treatments can be offered, although, as a general rule, most people will start conservatively. In fact, a common misconception about neck and back conditions is that they always need to be treated with surgery, Dr. Anderson says. However, most of the cases he sees for evaluation end up being treated by more conservative means. "There are a number of alternatives to surgery," he says.

Home remedies such as rest and over-the-counter medications,



including acetaminophen, nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs and pain-relieving medications applied to the skin, are often the first avenue of treatment. If those do not provide comfort, you can talk with your physician about:

- **PHYSICAL THERAPY.** A physical therapist can map out an exercise regimen and treatment plan that focuses on strengthening the structures that support the spine and its joints and easing the pain.

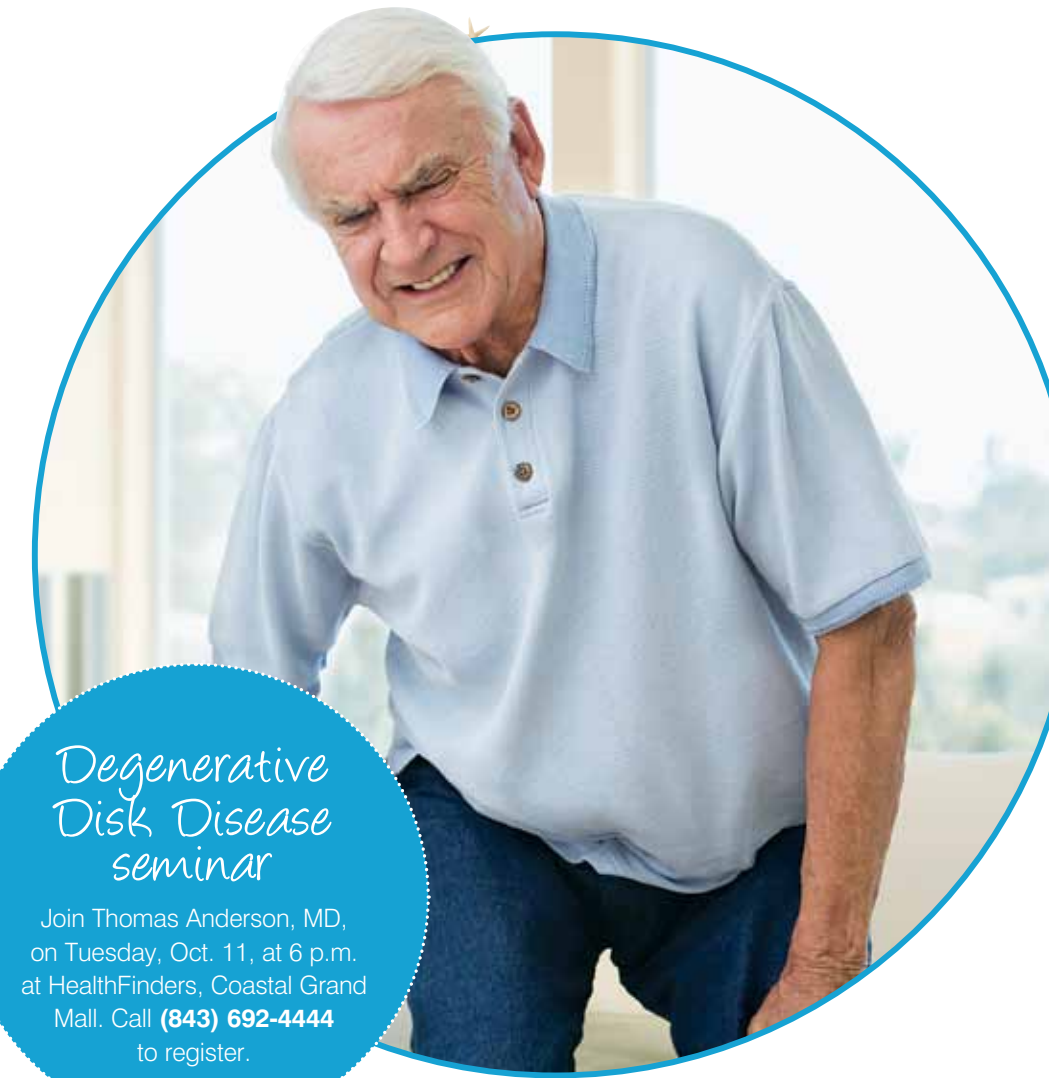
- **PRESCRIPTION PAIN MEDICATIONS.** Narcotics and muscle relaxants can be taken for a short period of time to lessen symptoms. Antidepressants and anti-seizure medications can also take the edge off pain. However, like any medication, side effects are possible, so you will need to discuss these first with your physician.

- **INJECTIONS.** Medication is delivered directly to the problem area to reduce inflammation and numb pain.

A more invasive, nonsurgical option offered is spinal cord stimulation, which involves the implantation of a device that sends electrical impulses to the spinal cord to treat chronic pain. This can benefit patients who do not get relief from more conservative measures but are not candidates for surgery.

### When all else fails

For those patients who are surgical candidates—in whom conservative treatments failed or those who have back instability or numbness—the surgeons at The Spine Center evaluate each patient on a case-by-case basis. The good news is that spinal



## Degenerative Disk Disease seminar

Join Thomas Anderson, MD, on Tuesday, Oct. 11, at 6 p.m. at HealthFinders, Coastal Grand Mall. Call **(843) 692-4444** to register.

surgery is not what it used to be. “Most spinal surgeries can be performed using minimally invasive approaches,” Dr. Anderson says. “What used to require a 6-inch incision can now be performed through a half-inch incision.”

Surgeons can remove damaged disks, replace disks and perform spinal and nerve decompressions and some spinal fusions through a minimally invasive approach. That means less pain, faster recovery, fewer complications and a quicker return to the life you enjoy.

So if you have suffered with chronic back and neck pain, do not wait any longer. Relief is within sight at Grand Strand Regional’s new spine center.

## The Spine Center physicians

### NEUROLOGY

JEFF BENJAMIN, DO  
MICHAEL McCAFFREY, MD  
GEORGE SANDOZ, MD  
BARBARA SARB, DO

### NEUROSURGERY

THOMAS ANDERSON, MD  
EUGENE GIDDENS, MD

