Advances in spine care include artificial disc replacement and minimally invasive surgery & O-arm surgical navigation

Several things have evolved in the field of neck surgery that have changed the specialty dramatically for 2018. These advances include:

**Artificial disc replacement**
Clinical outcomes research presented in early 2018 by the North American Spine Society now clearly recommends the use of artificial discs for the cervical spine to reduce “adjacent segment disc degeneration” that occurs with spinal fusion.

While cervical fusion has been the traditional option for herniated discs in the neck, research studies have shown that locking vertebral segments in the neck increases the stress placed on other discs in the neck, causing other disc herniations. Because the artificial disc retains normal motion, it reduces the risk of disc herniation at adjacent levels. KenaiSpine surgeons are trained in the use of the Mobi-C artificial disc, which was the first FDA-approved disc for one or two levels in the neck.

**Minimally invasive spine surgery**
The new standard is to perform spine surgery through a half-inch incision. Smaller incisions reduce blood loss and eliminate the need for outside blood; lessen pain after surgery and during recovery; and shorten the stay in the hospital. For example, some patients can go home the same day after spine surgery.

**Advanced O-arm navigation**
Kenai Spine’s two fellowship-trained spine surgeons — the highest level of medical training in the U.S. — have access to the most advanced O-arm surgical navigation technology available only at select number of hospitals in the U.S.

**Non-surgical options**
KenaiSpine tries to exhaust non-surgical treatment options before a surgery is recommended. This can include spinal injections that reduce inflammation around a nerve root — in some cases eliminating the need for surgery.

Kenai Spine is also the only spine center in Alaska to produce a Clinical Outcome Report Card and be included in a list of credentialed spine centers by SpineCenterNetwork.com.

**Spinal injections: An effective non-surgical option**
The benefit of a multi-disciplinary spine center is that it provides non-surgical options to help patients resolve symptoms and get back to activity without surgery. For example, Kenai Spine includes Mark Simonson, MD, a board-certified specialist in Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation.

Dr. Simonson trained at the Mayo Clinic, and has specialized in the treatment of back and neck pain patients for more than 20 years.

At Kenai Spine, he is sees new patients and is proficient in lumbar and cervical injections that can relieve pain symptoms along with weakness and numbness into an arm or leg.
S. CRAIG HUMPHREYS, MD
Board Certified Orthopedic Surgeon
Fellowship-Trained Spine Surgeon
Dr. Craig Humphreys earned his undergraduate degree at the University of Notre Dame. Dr. Craig Humphreys grew up in Alaska, graduating from Dimond High School in 1981. During the summers, he worked on the North Slope at Prudhoe Bay to help pay for college at the University of Notre Dame and medical school in Chicago. He started his practice as a fellowship-trained orthopedic spine surgeon, the highest level of medical education. Over the course of 16 years in Tennessee, Dr. Humphreys successfully treated thousands of patients both conservatively and surgically. He returned home to Alaska in 2011 to continue his career, founding Kenai Spine, a regional spine center. Dr. Humphreys’ practice philosophy is to explore and exhaust all non-surgical options in advance of the patient considering spine surgery. This includes the use of spine-specialized therapy and injections that can relieve pain symptoms.

JOHN L. ANDRESHAK, MD
Board Certified Orthopedic Surgeon
Fellowship-Trained Spine Surgeon
Dr. Andreshak has 20 years experience in the treatment of adult spine conditions. He specializes in degenerative spine conditions, artificial disc replacement in the cervical spine, spinal fusion, microdiscectomy and minimally invasive spine surgery. Dr. Andreshak relocated to Alaska from Chicago where he maintained an active spine surgery practice affiliated with the Northwestern Health System. He did his internship and residency at Loyola University Medical Center and then completed a fellowship in spine at the prestigious Mayo Clinic.

MARK SIMONSON, MD
Board Certified in Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation
Board Certified in Pain Medicine
Dr. Mark Simonson specializes in the nonsurgical relief of back and neck pain. Dr. Simonson received his medical degree, with Honors, from the University of Hawaii in 1994. He completed his training in nonsurgical treatment of neck and back pain at the prestigious Mayo Clinic. While at the Mayo Clinic, he was named the national resident representative on the Board of Directors of the Physiatric Association of Spine, Sports & Occupational Rehabilitation (PASSOR). Prior to medicine, Dr. Simonson was co-founder, designer and president of the world-leading Cybex line of fitness and rehabilitation products.

PHYSICIAN ASSISTANTS:

SUSAN REED, PA-C
Susan Reed has 13 years of orthopedic experience. She graduated from Midwestern University in 2004 and began working at Northwestern Medicine Orthopaedics. There she assisted with spine, total joint, hand, trauma, arthroscopic and foot and ankle surgeries.

MATTHEW MAY, RNFA

JODI HANSON, RN

A spine Center of Excellence with spine surgeons, physical medicine & spine therapy.

The 4 benefits of a 2nd opinion
Because spine surgery is a serious decision, it is a good idea to obtain a second opinion. A second opinion from Kenai Spine can provide patients the following benefits:
1. Determine if all possible treatment options have been considered and if there are any other nonsurgical options — such as spinal injections or physical therapy — that can relieve symptoms without the need for surgery.
2. If spine surgery is necessary, what type of spine surgery should be performed. A complex fusion procedure may not be necessary.
3. Is there a new artificial disc or implant technology that would provide a better outcome?
4. Help determine if the patient is a candidate for minimally invasive spine procedure in outpatient surgery. This may allow the patient to be home later that same afternoon, for a faster recovery and return to activity.

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Educational online spine encyclopedia at KenaiSpine.com has symptom charts, an exercise library and videos.