



**INTERNATIONAL
SOCIETY for the ADVANCEMENT of
SPINE SURGERY**

**2011 – 2012
BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

President
Jean-Charles LeHuec, MD, France

Incoming President
Steven Garfin, MD, USA

Luiz Pimenta, MD, Brazil

Treasurer
Gunnar B. J. Andersson, MD, PhD,
USA

Michael Ogon, MD, Austria

Hee Kit Wong, MD, PhD, Singapore

Immediate Past President
Thomas Errico, MD, USA

Past Presidents
Chun-Kun Park, MD, PhD, South Korea

Karin Büttner-Janz, MD, PhD, Germany

Hansen A. Yuan, MD, USA

Stephen Hochschuler, MD, USA
Founding Member

Thierry Marnay, MD, France
Founding Member

Rudolf Bertagnoli, MD, Germany
Founding Member

Charles Ray, MD, USA
Founding Member

**ISASS 12
PROGRAM COMMITTEE**

Overall Program Co-Chairs
Carlos Villanueva, MD
James Yue, MD

Basic Science Co-Chairs
Lisa Ferrara, PhD
Leonard Voronov, MD, PhD

Clinical Science Chair
Robert Gunzburg, MD, PhD

MIS Chair
Richard Assaker, MD

Poster Chair
Richard Kube, MD

July 15, 2011

James Corcoran, MD, Chief Contractor Medical Director
First Coast Service Operations, Inc.
Medical Policy
532 Riverside Avenue
ROC 19T
Jacksonville, FL 32202

Re Draft LCD number DL32074 – “Lumbar Spinal Fusion for Instability and Degenerative Disc Conditions”

Dear Dr. Corcoran,

I am writing on behalf of the International Society for the Advancement of Spine Surgery (ISASS) in regards to the above-mentioned Draft Local Coverage Determination. ISASS is an international, scientific and educational society organized to discuss and assess existing strategies and innovative ideas in the clinical and basic sciences related to spine surgery to enhance patient care.

ISASS' Board of Directors has recently approved our *Policy Statement on Lumbar Fusion Surgery*, attached, which consists of a thorough review of the literature around lumbar spinal fusions, and constitutes best practices and the standard of care. Note that this document is a *Policy Statement*, and not a *Treatment Guideline*. Accordingly, it only specifies the conditions for which lumbar fusion surgery is medically indicated – i.e. which diagnoses, which patients, and after which criteria are met.

ISASS has reviewed your Draft LCD for Lumbar Spinal Fusions, and must point out several specific deficiencies that will threaten patient access to medically indicated and necessary lumbar fusion surgeries:

- Our Policy Statement finds that a diagnosis of DDD should warrant lumbar fusions beyond a single level and should be indicated for a maximum of two levels.
- We are concerned about the limitations (or lack of coverage) around stenosis, when compression leads to iatrogenic instability.
- We are concerned that there is no coverage for multi-level fusions for spondylolisthesis.

Finally, we note that the CMS web site publicizing this draft LCD and highlighting the public comment period states, “this LCD was developed in cooperation with advisory groups, which includes representatives from numerous societies including neurosurgery and orthopedics.” We are very eager to learn the names of the neurosurgical and orthopaedic societies (and their representatives) who cooperated in helping to develop this LCD. We were not consulted on the development of this Draft LCD, nor are we aware that you reached out to the American Association of Neurological Surgeons/Congress of Neurosurgeons, the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons or the North American Spine Society.

Thank you for your consideration of our Policy Statement. Please contact Kristy Radcliffe (kristy@isass.org) or David Porter (david@isass.org) if you have any questions, or require any more information about our society or our Policy Statement.

Sincerely,

Jean-Charles LeHuec, MD, PhD
President, ISASS

Attachment: *ISASS Policy Statement on Lumbar Fusion Surgery*