ACUTE BACK PAIN MANAGEMENT ALGORITHM

Work-up by Primary Care/ECS
(including X-rays, CAT Scan, MRI, EMG, etc. as indicated)

Neurologic involvement
(Change in strength, sensation, muscle tone
Coordination, incontinence, etc.)

Yes   **No**

Surgical Consult

Immediate Surgical Intervention Indicated

Yes   **No**

Surgery

Non-Pharmacologic Interventions
Options include but are limited to:
1) **Nutrition consult for weight loss,**
2) **Psychology consult for:**
Evaluation, relaxation therapy,
bio-feedback, pain management therapy)
3) **Physical Therapy for exercise,**
stretching, strengthening
4) **Change in activity (job, etc.)**

Pharmacologic Interventions:
Options include but are not limited to:
1) **Anti-spasmotics**
2) **Pain medication in accordance**
with the WHO ladder
(NSAIDs, opioids, etc.)

Resolved
(within approximately 6 months)

Yes   **No**

See
Chronic Back Pain
Algorithm

CHRONIC BACK PAIN MANAGEMENT ALGORITHM

Evaluation by Primary Care Provider
(including X-ray, CAT Scan, MRI, EMG, etc as indicated)

Consults to Orthopedics and/or Neurosurgery

Surgery Indicated

Yes   **No**

Surgery   **Non-Pharmacologic**
Options include but are not limited to:
   1. Nutrition consult for weight loss,
   2. Physical Therapy for exercise,
   stretching, strengthening, TENS
   3. Psychology for pain management evaluation
   (relaxation therapy, biofeedback, pain
   management therapy)
   4. AquaTherapy at the PPVAMC
   5. Change in activity
   6. Vocational Rehab if change in
   occupation necessary
   7. Acupuncture

Pharmacologic:
Options include but are limited to:
1. Pain medication per WHO Guidelines
   (NSAIDs, opioids, etc.)
2. Antispasmotics
3. Tricyclic antidepressants

Pain decreased

Yes   **No**

Consult to
Anesthesia-Pain Clinic

Radicular pain   **Axial pain**

Diagnostic facet block   **Epidural Steroid**

Pain Decreased   **Pain Decreased**

Yes   **No**   **Yes**   **No**

Nerve lesioning

Pain decreased

Yes   **No**

Return to Primary Care for management
(If "NO" consider referral to non-VA Pain Management Center)
** Any time drug seeking/substance abuse is suspected consult Psychology-Substance Abuse **

Source: Gail Lieb
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