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

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

SOURCE: Gail Lieb
Baltimore VAMC
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. Antispasmodics
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
Baltimore VAMC