**OUTPATIENT GP REFERRAL GUIDELINES**

**NEUROSURGERY**

Southern Adelaide Local Health Network (SALHN)

### Spinal Disorders

- Degenerative changes or trauma.
- Axial back pain is not a localizing symptom of nerve compression but rather suggestive of inflammation / degeneration of the vertebrae, discs or facets.
- Radicular pain in the limbs is more suggestive of neural compromise and therefore of greater surgical relevance.

### Information Required

- Presence of Red flags
- Document exact distribution of limb pain including paraesthesia/numbness
- Document focal neurology
- Past history
- Previous treatment – surgical/injections

### Investigations Required

- X-rays AP & lateral view
- CT spine / MRI if available
- FBE/ELU /ESR/CRP if infection is suspected

### Fax Referrals to

- Neurosurgery Clinic Fax: 8204 5116

### Red Flags

- Fall From height
- History of malignancy
- Midthoracic pain
- Absent or reduced anal tone
- Saddle anaesthesia
- Incontinence – urinary or faecal
- IV drug use /HIV
- Immunosuppressants
- Fever, infective indicators
- Radiculopathy, radiating limb pain

### Suggested GP Management

**Consider the causes**

- Complete functional assessment
- Patient Education/ exercise /activity
- Preliminary investigations
- Patient reassurance
- Analgesia (refer to National prescribing guidelines)
- Short term muscle relaxant
- Physiotherapy /hydrotherapy
- TENS therapy

If no Neurological red flags and investigations are normal a period of observation over 6 weeks is acceptable.

Refer to FMC Neurosurgery Registrar if red flags present 8204 5511

### Clinical Resources

- National prescribing service for recommended staging of analgesia
- Neurosurgical Society of Australasia
  [www.nsa.org.au](http://www.nsa.org.au)

### Patient Information


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General Information to assist with referrals and the and Referral templates for FMC and RGH are available to download from the SALHN Outpatient Services website [www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/SALHNoutpatients](http://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/SALHNoutpatients)