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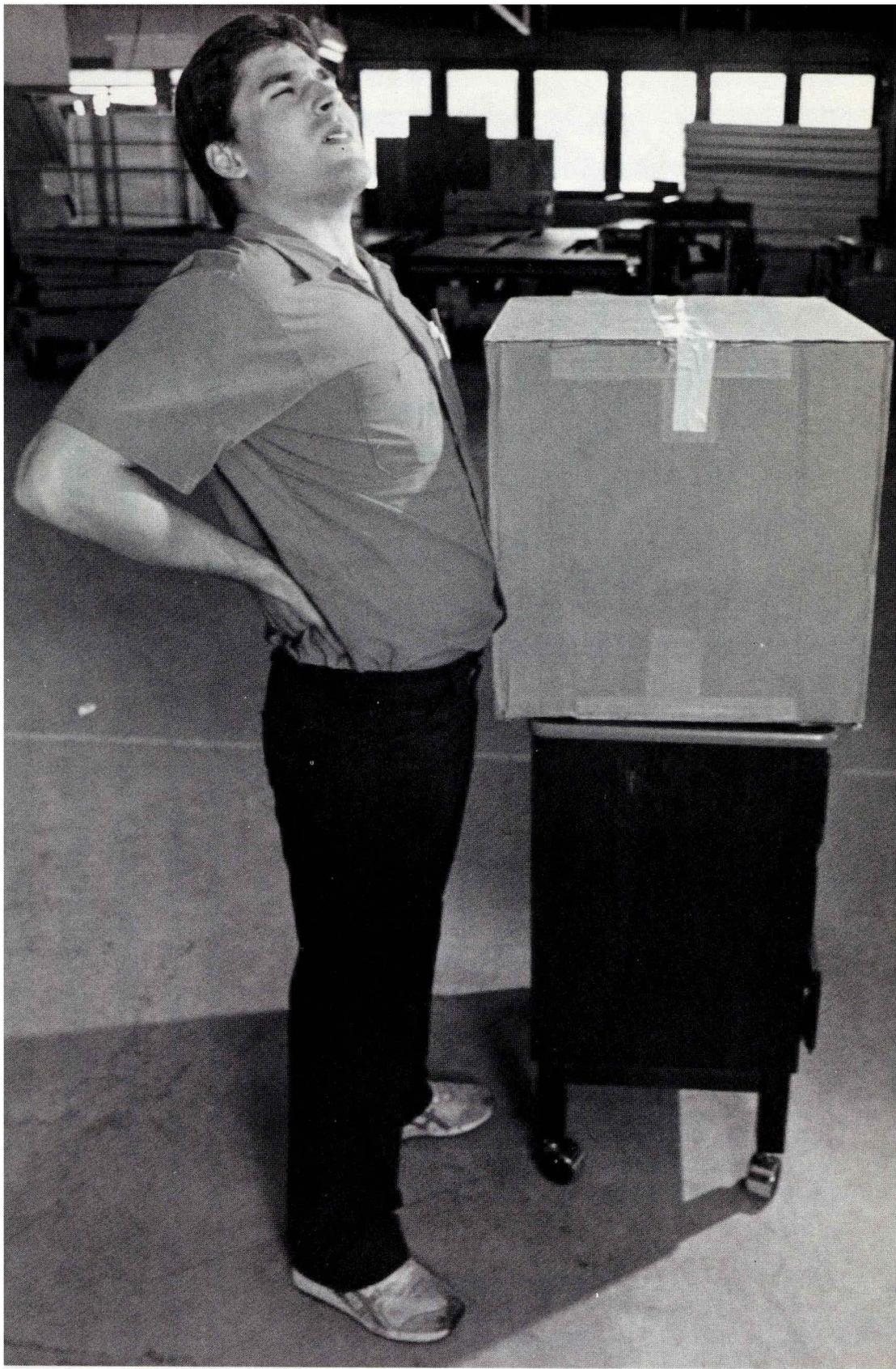
**SPINE  
TREATMENT**  
A Guide for Patients

Spine Diagnostic and Treatment Center  
Department of Orthopaedic Surgery  
The University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics

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## CREDITS

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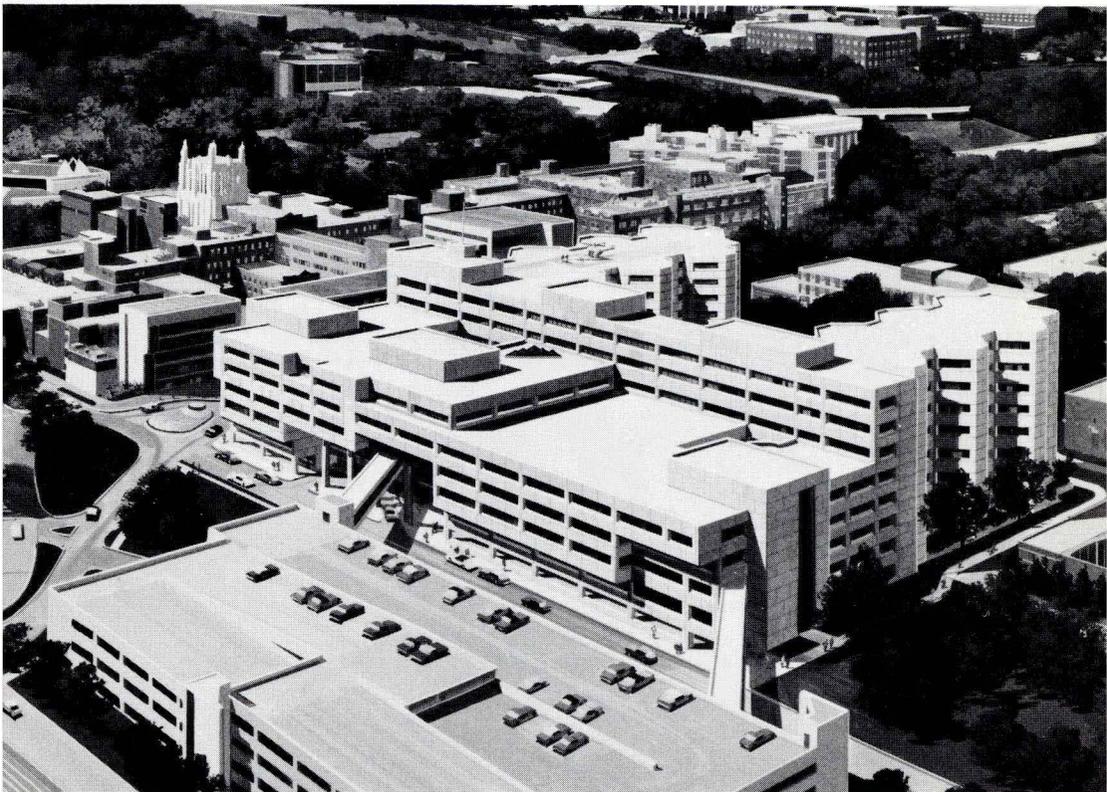
# Introduction

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Welcome to the Spine Diagnostic and Treatment Center at The University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics. We hope to help you cope with the pain that you have been experiencing and assist you in realizing your fullest potential to participate in the activities of daily living. Various therapies will be used in the treatment of your condition, all of which may be effective. The goals of the Spine Diagnostic and Treatment Center are

- to determine a specific diagnosis of your back problem;
- to outline a recommended treatment plan (surgical or nonsurgical);
- to increase your activity tolerance, flexibility, strength;
- to educate you in a program of good back care;
- to decrease your usage of medications if this has been a problem;
- to prepare you to return to your vocation or normal activities; and
- to help you to manage back pain.

The University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics



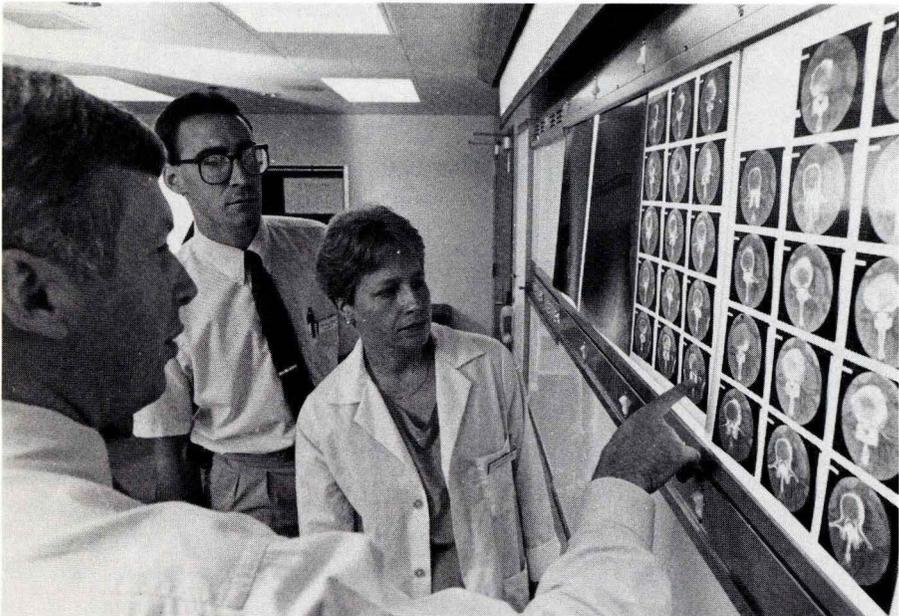
## Acute screening

In order to meet these goals, the knowledge and skills of a number of medical and professional staff are required. Therefore, you will be treated by a team of physicians, nurses, physical therapists, medical social workers, dietitians, vocational rehabilitation counselors, psychologists, and ergonomic specialists.

The remainder of this booklet describes some of the evaluations you may undergo as a patient in the center and the center's Low Back Pain Rehabilitation Program.

This assessment was developed through the Spine Diagnostic and Treatment Center to offer immediate service to patients with severe low back pain that has existed for less than 12 weeks. The half-day screening is administered by a licensed physical therapist and includes

- neurologic examination of reflexes, motor strength, and sensation;
- range of motion measurements;
- structural posture analysis;
- other tests as needed; and
- consultation with a physician and other team members, as indicated.



# Functional capacity evaluation

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This evaluation objectively measures the ability to perform various tasks and determines at what level a person can maintain physical activities. Results of the evaluation also help team members recommend future treatment, determine if job requirements are within a safe working range, and provide information on alternative employment, if necessary.

### The one-day assessment includes

- cardiovascular evaluation;
- lifting strength testing;
- trunk strength testing;
- trunk range of motion measurements;
- activities of daily living;
- job simulation;
- medical social work interview to discuss your present situation, the effect of back pain on your lifestyle, and what can be done to help you meet your goals; and
- instruction in back care, exercises, and lifting.

### The two-day assessment includes

- job evaluation;
- cardiovascular evaluation;
- lifting strength testing;
- body mechanics;
- activities of daily living;
- repetitive lifting, pushing, and carrying;

- work tolerance, which includes five activities performed repetitively for three to four hours to assess the individual's ability to sustain work-related tasks and help define functional capacity;
- medical social work interview to discuss your present situation, the effect of back pain on your lifestyle, and what can be done to help you meet your goals; and
- instruction in back care, lifting, and a home conditioning program.

### Analysis and treatment recommendations

At a weekly meeting, the center's team discusses, with the medical director of the center, the results of the acute screening assessment and functional capacity evaluations for each individual. Each team member provides an estimation of the person's condition. The medical director then determines if further diagnostic testing is needed and/or begins planning treatment.

# Low back pain rehabilitation program

The Low Back Pain Rehabilitation Program is a two- to three-week program for persons with chronic low back pain. Admission to the program indicates that the spine center team has evaluated your back problem and does not feel that surgery or other invasive treatment would be helpful for you at this time.

The goals of the program are

- to help you function at a higher physical level so that you can return to work and/or have a more satisfying life-style;
- to decrease the amount of medication you have been using for pain control, if that has been a problem for you;
- to educate you in a program of good back care; and
- to help you understand and control your pain.

## The program

The treatment program is individualized for each patient, but generally consists of

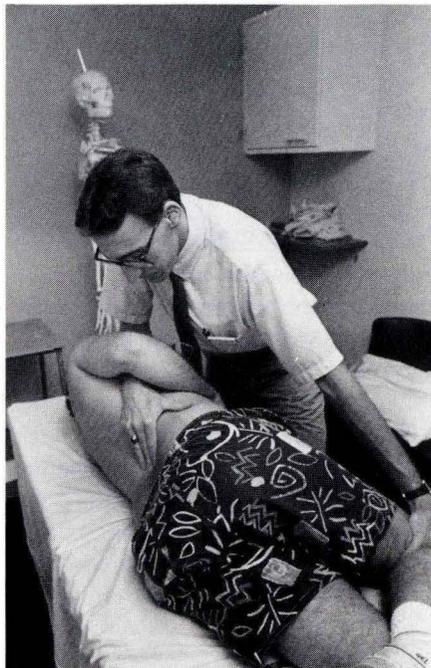
**Physical therapy**—A physical therapist works with you to build an exercise program specific to your needs, teaching you exercises to improve your trunk strength, spinal mobility, posture, and endurance.

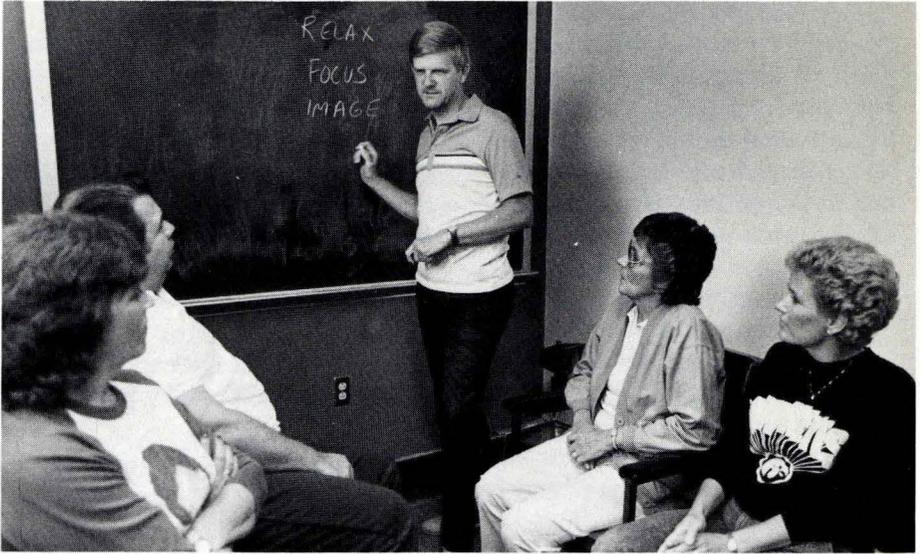
**Cardiopulmonary conditioning**—A progressive bicycling and walking

program is designed to build your endurance.

**Education program**—Through a series of daily lecture/discussion groups, you receive information to improve your understanding of your chronic low back pain and good back care. Things you will learn include

- the anatomy of the back;
- the causes of low back pain and treatments;
- the impact of chronic pain on a person, family, friends, and employer;
- workmen's compensation, Social Security, and disability claims;





- pain and pain mechanisms;
- physical fitness;
- nutrition and weight control;
- body mechanics; and
- posture.

Reading and audiovisual materials will also be provided for your use.

**Coping skills training**—You will be trained in a variety of pain management techniques that should help you develop the ability to control your pain.

**Vocational rehabilitation**—Vocational counseling and evaluation are available.

### **Self-care**

Responsibility for self-care is important to help you maintain your individual program after leaving the hospital. The team establishes goals with you and assists you in reaching these goals. Throughout the program, the team assesses whether your goals are being met, evaluates your progress, and discusses problems, adjusting the program accordingly.

### **Family program**

Your spouse or another designated person is encouraged to arrange a

meeting with our staff during your evaluation or while you are participating in the program to learn more about the management of chronic back pain and how to assist you in your rehabilitation.

### **Personal items**

Participants in the program are requested to bring the following for their stay:

- comfortable exercise clothing;
- street clothes;
- soft-soled shoes or comfortable walking shoes, such as tennis shoes;
- swimsuit, if you wish to swim; and
- personal grooming items.

### **Medication**

Your physicians will prescribe appropriate medications for you. Any pain medications will be given on a regular schedule; you will not need to ask for them. If you have been taking undesirable medications, they will be reduced over a reasonable period of time.

### **Program conclusion**

At the completion of the program, you will be given a home program of exercises, medication (if needed), and recommendations regarding your activities. A written report about your activities during the program



will be sent to you and your insurance carrier.

Upon discharge, your progress will be monitored by the team at regular follow-up appointments at two weeks, six weeks, three months, and six months.

To evaluate the effectiveness of the rehabilitation program and assist us in the development of cure and



treatment of low back pain, you may be asked to complete various questionnaires. You will be asked about your pain, medical history, health, personal experiences, and attitudes. This information is kept in a confidential file for use only by members of the rehabilitation team who are working with you.

#### **Fees and insurance**

Fees include evaluation, treatment, and six months of follow-up care. Insurance approval is required prior to admission to the program. Please

check with your insurance agent regarding the amount of your coverage because there is considerable variation among insurance firms and policies.

#### **Worker's compensation claims**

If your injury is work related and is to be covered by worker's compensation, you must have written authorization from your insurance carrier before treatment can begin.





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