

We understand that you are in pain, and we know how difficult and overwhelming that can be. Pain affects not only your body, but also your sleep, your mood, and your daily activities. Our first priority is to listen, to understand your situation, and to help you through this process with compassion and care.

### **Step 1: Making Sure You're Safe**

The very first thing we do is determine where your pain is coming from. Sometimes, pain may be a sign of something more serious—such as problems with the kidneys, appendix, or blood vessels—that can mimic spine or joint pain. If we suspect anything urgent, we may recommend emergency evaluation right away. Your safety always comes first.

### **Step 2: A Complete Evaluation**

Once we know there is no immediate danger, we perform a full evaluation. This includes taking a detailed history, doing a physical examination, and ordering the right tests. These may include:

- **X-rays or CT scans:** show bones and structure.
- **MRI scans:** show nerves, discs, and soft tissue.
- **EMGs (nerve tests):** show how well nerves and muscles are working.
- **Vascular studies:** check blood flow.

Each test provides unique information to help us pinpoint the cause of your pain.

### **Step 3: Keeping You Comfortable**

While we are working on finding the cause, it's important that you stay as comfortable as possible. Being in constant pain can weaken your muscles, disturb your sleep, increase frustration, and make the pain worse. In these early stages, medicines or other options may be used to help you rest, move, and cope better. We don't want your brain or body to 'get used to' pain as your new normal.

### **Step 4: A Comprehensive Treatment Plan**

Once we have the information we need, we'll create a plan together. Years ago, treatment often meant just medicine, or just injections, or just surgery. We now know that the best way to treat pain—especially spine-related pain—is through a **comprehensive, team-based approach**. This may include medications, physical therapy, injections, alternative treatments, and behavior modifications. Strengthening your muscles, protecting your spine, and managing your daily activities are all essential.

### **Your Role as a Patient**

You are the most important part of your treatment team. Success depends on consistency, discipline, and following through with exercises and treatment plans. It's also important to recognize which habits or activities may be making pain worse, and to communicate changes to us promptly.

### **Working Together Through the System**

We know the healthcare system can sometimes feel slow and frustrating—visits, imaging, authorizations, and paperwork all take time. This can add to your stress. Please know that we are here to guide you through this process, keep you as comfortable as possible, and adjust your care plan as needed. Reaching us through phone calls or online messages allows us to respond and adapt your treatment along the way.

**Mind and Body Connection**

Pain is not only physical. It can take an emotional toll, leading to worry, frustration, or even hopeless thoughts. These feelings can worsen your pain. Part of your treatment includes learning tools to manage these emotions, so your mind stays as strong as your body.

**Ongoing Care**

With a multi-disciplinary approach, we will regularly re-evaluate your progress and adjust the plan as needed. Remember—we are a team. You are not alone. Our goal is to help you feel better, regain strength, and return to the activities that matter most to you.

We look forward to working with you and supporting you every step of the way.

Sincerely,

**Dr. Haz Cassim**