Abstract:

OBJECT: Pyogenic vertebral infections are rare. In most papers investigators have focused on risk factors, clinical characteristics, and diagnostic findings, and discussed different management strategies. The optimal strategy for dealing with spinal infections, however, remains controversial. Additionally, outcome data regarding quality of life (QOL) after pyogenic spinal infections are sparse. The aim of this study was to provide further data in this field.

METHODS: The authors retrospectively investigated 62 patients suffering from pyogenic spinal infections. In 37 patients (59%), lumbar lesions were observed; thoracic and thoracolumbar infections were documented in 19 (31%) and a cervical infection was demonstrated in six patients (10%). Overall 28 patients (45%) underwent conservative treatment, and 34 (55%) underwent surgery with or without the placement of instrumentation. At follow-up examination the authors recorded each patient’s satisfaction as well as QOL according to the 36-Item Short Form Health Survey. Quality of life after treatment of pyogenic spine infections did not reach the level of the normative sample. Most patients continued to suffer some sort of pain. Despite different indications, the surgically treated patients experienced a slightly better QOL and self-reported satisfaction levels, as well as a statistically significant better outcome, than patients treated conservatively.

CONCLUSIONS: The results obtained
in the present study suggest that surgery, especially in conjunction with the placement of instrumentation, may be more beneficial than conservative treatment in patients with a spinal infection.