**Antibiotics & Back Pain**

**ANTIBIOTIC TREATMENT FOR CHRONIC LOW BACK PAIN**

The British Association of Spine Surgeons (BASS) actively promotes the study of spinal disorders and welcomes any research aimed at improving the understanding and treatment of spinal conditions.

Recently there has been considerable media coverage of a study published in the European Spine Journal suggesting that some patients with severe low back pain may benefit from treatment with antibiotics.

BASS considers this to be a well conducted trial which provides evidence that a **small** number of patients **could** gain some **moderate** improvement in their condition with a course of antibiotics.

A patient who may be appropriate for consideration of this treatment needs to fulfil specific criteria. They need to have:-

* Low back pain of more than six months duration.
* + Pain which occurs after a previous disc herniation (whether or not it was treated with surgery).
* + Inflammatory Changes in the bone either side of the herniated disc identified by an MRI scan referred to as Modic type I changes.

If your general practitioner considers that you might fulfil these criteria then it would be sensible to seek the opinion of a local [spinal specialist](http://www.spinesurgeons.ac.uk/patients/find-a-surgeon).

BASS consider it regrettable that the media coverage has suggested that antibiotic therapy may be a panacea for the treatment of low back pain. This is not the case.

BASS would like to emphasise that this treatment is probably only appropriate for a very small proportion of the large number of patients who suffer with low back pain.

The study has also raised questions which need to be answered by further investigation.

BASS is encouraging its members to participate in further studies aimed at answering these questions.

The BASS Executive