



# Australian Association of Musculoskeletal Medicine

---

## Intradiscal Electrothermal Treatment for Chronic Discogenic Low Back Pain

### Prospective Outcome Study With a Minimum 2-Year Follow-Up

Jeffrey A. Saal, MD; Joel S. Saal, MD

From SOAR, Physiatry Medical Group, Menlo Park, California.

SPINE 2002;27:966-973

---

**Study Design.** Prospective longitudinal study with a minimum 2-year follow-up.

**Objective.** To assess the long-term outcome of a group of patients with chronic discogenic low back pain who had failed to improve with comprehensive nonoperative care and who were subsequently treated with intradiscal electrothermal therapy (IDET).

**Summary of Background Data.** Previous reports of patient outcomes at 1 year after IDET have demonstrated statistically significant improvement.

**Methods.** The study group comprised 58 patients with chronic symptoms of more than 6 months who failed to improve with nonoperative care and subsequently underwent IDET. VAS pain scores, SF-36 scores, and sitting tolerance times were collected pretreatment and at 6, 12, and 24 months.

**Results.** Mean duration of pre-IDET symptoms was 60.7 months. The minimum follow-up at data collection was 24 months. The study group (n = 58) demonstrated a significant improvement in pain as demonstrated by statistically significant improvement in VAS scores and bodily pain SF-36 scores. The IDET-treated group demonstrated a significant improvement in physical function as noted by statistically significant improvement in sitting tolerance times and physical function SF-36 scores. Bodily pain and physical function scores demonstrated significant improvement between the 1- and 2-year observation points. Additionally, quality of life improvement was demonstrated by a statistically significant improvement in all the SF-36 subscales.

**Conclusions.** A cohort of patients with chronic discogenic low back pain who had failed to improve with comprehensive nonoperative care demonstrated a statistically significant improvement in pain, physical function, and quality of life at 2 years after IDET.

**Key words:** intradiscal electrothermal treatment; discogenic pain; internal disc derangement; annulus tear; annulus fissure; minimally invasive surgery; chronic low back pain; annuloplasty; lumbar degenerative disc disease] **Spine 2002;27:966-974**

Spine 2002 May 1;27(9):966-973  
Copyright © 2002 Lippincott Williams & Wilkins  
All rights reserved

All correspondence to the Hon. Secretary: Dr. Michael Yelland  
**E-mail:** secretary@musmed.com **Web Page:** <http://www.musmed.com>