

FJIs and Surgical Outlook

Facet Joint injections are made up of an anaesthetic and a steroid; an anti-inflammatory one. In principle they are supposed to act as a form of pain relief, but I will admit I am very skeptical this will be the case with me. I actually anticipate ending up with increased levels of pain, however it is worth a shot I guess - no pun intended. It is something that can only be trialed prior to surgery, in my case in the wait or surgery now, so if you are willing to explore the option; that is when to flag it up.

I really didn't want to put injections on the cards, I have however been half coerced into it. I am now at the stage where it is more 'do whatever you like, I no longer care'. The pain flare up that started in October has had little reprieve, I think the longest I have made it, is about 5 days without being drugged, the latest was 3 days, other than that some form of medication has to go in to maintain some form of rationality and/or functioning. It is in no way ideal, but at least allows me to continue living, even if it isn't at full flow, and to attend uni. I live in hope that the pain flare up will pass once the winter comes to an end.

The SPECT report was done in a rush and I am still yet to receive the full written copy, from the botched up summary though, no major 'red hot points' were highlighted. Most of my neck is in the purple region though, so I am guessing we are not far off. The report was supposed to help pinpoint an exact location for the injections however, now they are still going to go ahead and do it without one. Problems seem to be stemming from the C4-5 level, backed up by my ongoing symptoms but explaining the pain in medical terms is still somewhat inconclusive.

My consultant shares my skepticism on the injections working hence he is having surgery scheduled close to them, but he wants the injections just so we know all bases have been covered. He is going with surgery on the basis the over-stretching of the spinal cord is what causes the pain, swelling and intermittent tremors and other symptoms etc. He believes that reducing the height (and therefore the stretch) via fusion (ACDF), everything should improve. Getting to that point though comes with its own set of difficulties because he doesn't know what surprises are awaiting him when he goes in.

He has voiced several routes he may have to take alongside the normal one, he knows there will be some deviation but he doesn't know the extent yet. To give us all the best possible advantage, he has requested an entire medical team derived of the best consultants he knows, and a whole load of spinal monitoring equipment to be used throughout surgery. He anticipates the surgery being tricky but I know I am in the best possible hands. In the meantime, I have the looming injections coming soon.