

# Peer-Reviewed Articles in Spine Surgery

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**W**ith the world's population approaching 7 billion and our patients living longer and pursuing more active lifestyles, we expect continued increases in the annual rates of spinal procedures. Globalization of our economy and open access to information via the Internet and other electronic media will likely drive patients in all regions of the world to want the same treatment of their spinal disorders as we receive here in the United States.

It is thus noteworthy that *The American Journal of Orthopedics*\* has a long history in assessing the relationship between surgeons and the implant device industry and is committed to our peer-review process to determine whether articles supporting these treatments truly demonstrate proven scientific benefits.<sup>1-3</sup> This will continue to be an ongoing issue for journals, since device companies drive new technologies in the market to maximize profits, and there is a competitive advantage to be gained by producing peer-reviewed evidence to support these technologies. Published articles are of greater value than white papers, especially in areas such as biologics for spinal fusion and dynamic stabilization devices, such as total disc replacement. In recent issues of the journal, we have published multiple articles in the field of spine



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sented and  
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conclusions.”**

\*AJO has taken a strong position on the issue of surgeons' relationships with the implant industry dating back to 2006. (Please see the references list.) The contributors to the papers published in the April E-publishing section of AJO have fully complied with the AJO policy of full disclosure of their relationships with industry.

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surgery on some of these topics, and, in our peer-review process, we have dealt with this issue by using independent spine surgeons.

The field of spine surgery is on the frontier of medicine, and, with the large profits to be gained by spinal device manufacturers, we will continue to see several emerging technologies on the market. This growth in new technologies has significant potential to benefit our patients. However, the companies with the deepest pockets will be best positioned to provide financial support to their consulting surgeons and researchers in order to generate evidence that could affect the success or failure of a technology.

As Editorial Board members, we assure our readers that we will continue to look critically at this evidence before we recommend publication, but in the end there is still a leap of faith when assessing the data, and we rely on the integrity of the contributing authors to use truthful and accurate data in their submissions. Full disclosure of authors' relationships with the implant industry is standard and appropriate. While disclosure of such relationships does not neutralize the conflict, *The American Journal of Orthopedics* believes that such transparency will help our readers understand the data in the best possible light. The articles in this month's E-publishing section of AJO have all been independently peer-reviewed by expert spine surgeons, and all contributing authors have fully disclosed their relationships with industry. Needless to say, as with all articles published today, regardless of the authors' disclosures, it is beholden to all of us as physician readers to assess the evidence that is presented and determine individually the validity of the conclusions.

(continued on page E91)

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## Further Reading

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