

# New York Spine Surgeons Tout Study of Depression's Effect on Recovery

*The doctors at Reconstructive Spine Surgery near NYC say research showing depressed people heal more slowly after back surgery is useful for recovery planning.*

GARDEN CITY, NY, USA, August 31, 2014 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The board-certified physicians at Reconstructive Spine Surgery ([www.reconstructivespinesurgery.com](http://www.reconstructivespinesurgery.com)) say new research showing patients recover more slowly if they suffer from depression before spine surgery reflects what they've seen at their New York City-area practice. The study's conclusions also emphasize the importance of both emotional and physical support during recovery, the doctors say.

"Diagnosis and physical treatment of spinal conditions is only part of the overall therapeutic plan for patients at our practice," says Dr. Benjamin R. Cohen, one of the leading spine surgeons serving New York City. "This study shows the importance of also recognizing the role of mental health in how patients heal from surgery."

Results [of the study](#), which appeared in the August issue of the Journal of Neurosurgery: Spine, showed that preoperative depression and anxiety are linked to less successful recovery following spinal surgery. It specifically looked at patients older than 65.

"The extent of preoperative depression is an independent predictor of less functional improvement following revision lumbar surgery in elderly patients," the authors concluded. "Timely diagnosis and treatment of depression and somatic anxiety in this cohort of patients may contribute to improvement in postoperative functional status."

Although the study focused on elderly patients, Dr. Marc Agulnick, another of the team of physicians at Reconstructive Spine Surgery, says he believes the message is valid for patients across a wide demographic spectrum.

"We know that patients with a positive outlook going into surgery typically heal more quickly than people who are preoperatively anxious and depressed," says the New York spine doctor who specializes in orthopaedic issues. "Of course, anxiety is normal prior to any surgical procedure, especially spine surgery. We try to identify patients experiencing depression and anxiety at more extreme levels."

In some cases, mental health treatment might be recommended for patients experiencing

difficulty during their recovery, says Dr. Thomas Davenport, the other member of the practice's [trio of surgeons](#).

"Spine and back problems — especially chronic pain — are often accompanied by depression because people are struggling through daily bouts of discomfort and are frequently unable to work," Dr. Davenport says. "Spine problems and depression almost have a cause-and-effect relationship in that way."

Fixing spinal problems does help many of their patients turn a corner mentally and emotionally, the doctors say, but it's best to start addressing depression from the first consultation and not wait until after an operation.

"Surgeons and their staffs should be on the lookout for emotional issues from the start," Dr. Cohen says. "As doctors, our goal is to help our patients be as healthy as possible, and that means caring for their bodies and their minds."

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