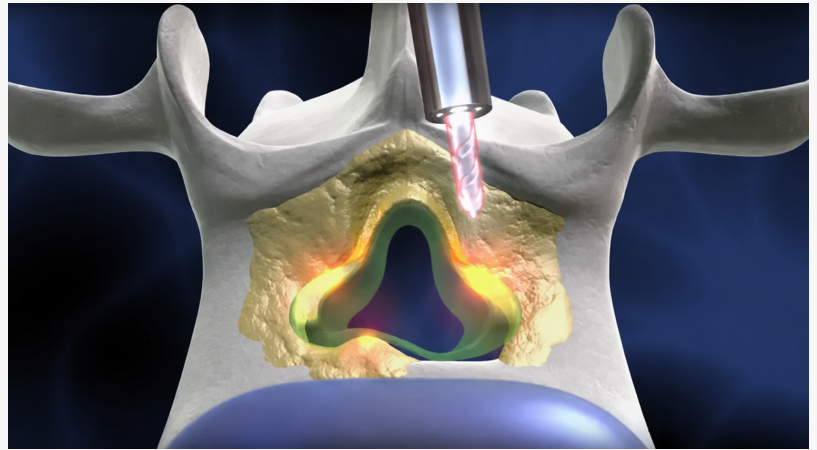


As Report Finds an Unnecessary Back Surgery Every Eight Minutes, SC Surgeon Offers Full-Endoscopic Alternative to Fusion

Synergy Spine Center in Seneca performs full-endoscopic spinal surgery for herniated disc and stenosis — a one-hour outpatient alternative to fusion.

SENECA, SC, UNITED STATES, July 30, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- A national report released in October 2025 by the Lown Institute found that U.S. hospitals performed more than 200,000 unnecessary back surgeries on Medicare patients over three years — the equivalent of one low-value back



procedure every eight minutes — at a cost of more than \$1.9 billion. Against that backdrop, Synergy [Spine Center](#); Physician Group, P.A., a Seneca, South Carolina practice, is drawing attention to a less-invasive option many patients are never told about: full-endoscopic spinal surgery, an outpatient alternative to [spinal fusion](#) for herniated disc and [spinal stenosis](#).

“

Relieve your back pain without screws, rods, or fusion.”

Dr. Marion McMillan

The concern is not limited to the operating room. A study published in JAMA Network Open reported that the total U.S. cost of inpatient lumbar fusion reached roughly \$14 billion in 2023, with the average fusion case costing about

\$45,000 — up more than 75 percent since 2002. Spinal fusion also carries a complication rate that published reviews place near 18 percent. For a growing number of patients, the question is whether a smaller, evidence-based operation could achieve the same relief.

Synergy Spine Center’s answer is full-endoscopic spinal surgery. Rather than fusing vertebrae with screws, rods, and plates, the technique uses a pencil-sized, lighted tube inserted through an incision of less than one-third inch to remove only the herniation or stenosis pressing on the nerve — the actual source of the pain. The procedure is performed on an outpatient basis, frequently under local anesthesia, and most patients return home the same day.

“When a report finds we’re doing an unnecessary back surgery every eight minutes in this country, that should stop all of us cold,” said Marion R. McMillan, MD, founder and medical director of Synergy Spine Center. “Most people who are told they need a spinal fusion are never told there is another way. For a herniated disc or spinal stenosis, we can often remove only what is pressing on the nerve — through an incision smaller than a half inch, in about an hour, on an outpatient basis. No screws. No rods. No fusion. And we tell the patient the full price before they ever agree to it.”

A less-invasive alternative to spinal fusion

Full-endoscopic spinal surgery is a minimally invasive alternative to spinal fusion. It is carried out with continuous fluid irrigation in a bloodless surgical field, and high-definition video magnification gives the surgeon a detailed, real-time view of the anatomy. Because the technique targets only the source of the compression — whether a herniated disc, a bone spur, or the arthritic buildup behind spinal stenosis — it spares the surrounding muscle and bone and avoids the hardware and extended recovery associated with open fusion surgery.

According to the practice, patients typically go home within a few hours rather than spending two to four days in the hospital, and many report meaningful relief within two to five days. Published, peer-reviewed, randomized controlled trials comparing full-endoscopic surgery with conventional microsurgical technique have reported comparable results for many patients with lumbar disc herniation and stenosis, with fewer complications. Synergy publishes the medical literature behind its methods and



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states its philosophy plainly: the best care is grounded in scientific research and controlled clinical trials.

That evidence-first stance also shapes what the practice declines to do. Synergy rarely performs epidural steroid injections, citing the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's safety warning and the limited, often short-lived benefit for many patients. For those who have already undergone a fusion that did not relieve their pain — a group large enough that "failed back surgery syndrome" is a recognized diagnosis — the practice offers a fresh evaluation and, where appropriate, endoscopic options.

Transparent, all-inclusive pricing

Synergy Spine Center is among the few surgical practices in the region to publish its prices. Its all-inclusive bundled pricing covers the surgeon, anesthesia, facility fee, and routine follow-up in a single, known figure, so patients understand the cost of care before they commit. The practice accepts Medicare and commercial insurance, and for self-pay, HSA, and high-deductible patients, the published price is often a fraction of typical hospital charges for the same procedure — a pointed contrast with fusion costs that now average tens of thousands of dollars per case.

"Transparency isn't a marketing slogan for us — it's a matter of conscience," McMillan said. "A patient in pain deserves to know two things up front: whether they truly need surgery, and exactly what it will cost. We'll tell them the truth about both. If someone isn't a candidate, we say so. And when the evidence doesn't support a procedure, we recommend against it — even when it would be profitable to do otherwise."

A free MRI review — for local and out-of-town patients

Patients weighing their options can request a free MRI review. A patient submits an MRI — by secure online upload or by mail — and a surgeon reviews it at no cost and provides a candid assessment of whether full-endoscopic surgery is appropriate. For out-of-town and out-of-state patients, the review comes first: if a patient is not a candidate, travel to the Seneca facility is not required. Candidates are guided through a short, structured multi-day visit for evaluation, procedure, and post-operative follow-up.

The practice is led by Marion R. McMillan, MD, a Yale- and Tufts-trained physician who has practiced in Upstate South Carolina since 1992 and holds two United States patents in minimally invasive spinal technique. He has authored peer-reviewed papers and textbook chapters on endoscopic spine surgery and is a member of the North American Spine Society, is an associate member of the American Association of Neurological Surgeons, and is an associate member of the American Association of Neurological Surgeons. His areas of focus include herniated and bulging discs, spinal stenosis, sciatica, and facet-joint arthritis pain, along with cooled radiofrequency treatment for knee, hip, and shoulder osteoarthritis.

Patients and referring physicians can learn more about endoscopic spine surgery, alternatives to spinal fusion, and the practice's transparent pricing — or begin a free MRI review — at

synergyspinecenter.com or by calling the practice directly.

Note to editors — data sources

Unnecessary back surgery figures (“every eight minutes,” 200,000+ procedures, \$1.9 billion): Lown Institute Hospitals Index, “Unnecessary Back Surgery” report, October 2025. Lumbar fusion cost figures (\$14 billion aggregate; ~\$45,000 per case; 75.9% increase since 2002): JAMA Network Open, 2025. Fusion complication rate (~18%): systematic reviews of spinal fusion complications. Full-endoscopic vs. conventional outcomes: Ruetten et al., prospective randomized controlled trials (Spine; J Neurosurg Spine). Practice-specific details, pricing, and the free MRI review are provided by Synergy Spine Center.

About Synergy Spine Center

Synergy Spine Center Physician Group, P.A., located in Seneca, South Carolina, specializes in full-endoscopic, minimally invasive spinal surgery as an alternative to spinal fusion for herniated disc, spinal stenosis, and related conditions. Founded and led by Marion R. McMillan, MD — a Yale- and Tufts-trained, board-certified physician and holder of two U.S. patents in minimally invasive spinal technique — the practice combines patented, evidence-based surgical methods with transparent, all-inclusive pricing and a free MRI review for patients evaluating their options. Its mission is to change the practice of spine medicine through innovation in both treatment and pricing, and to give patients an honest, less-invasive choice in their care.

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