

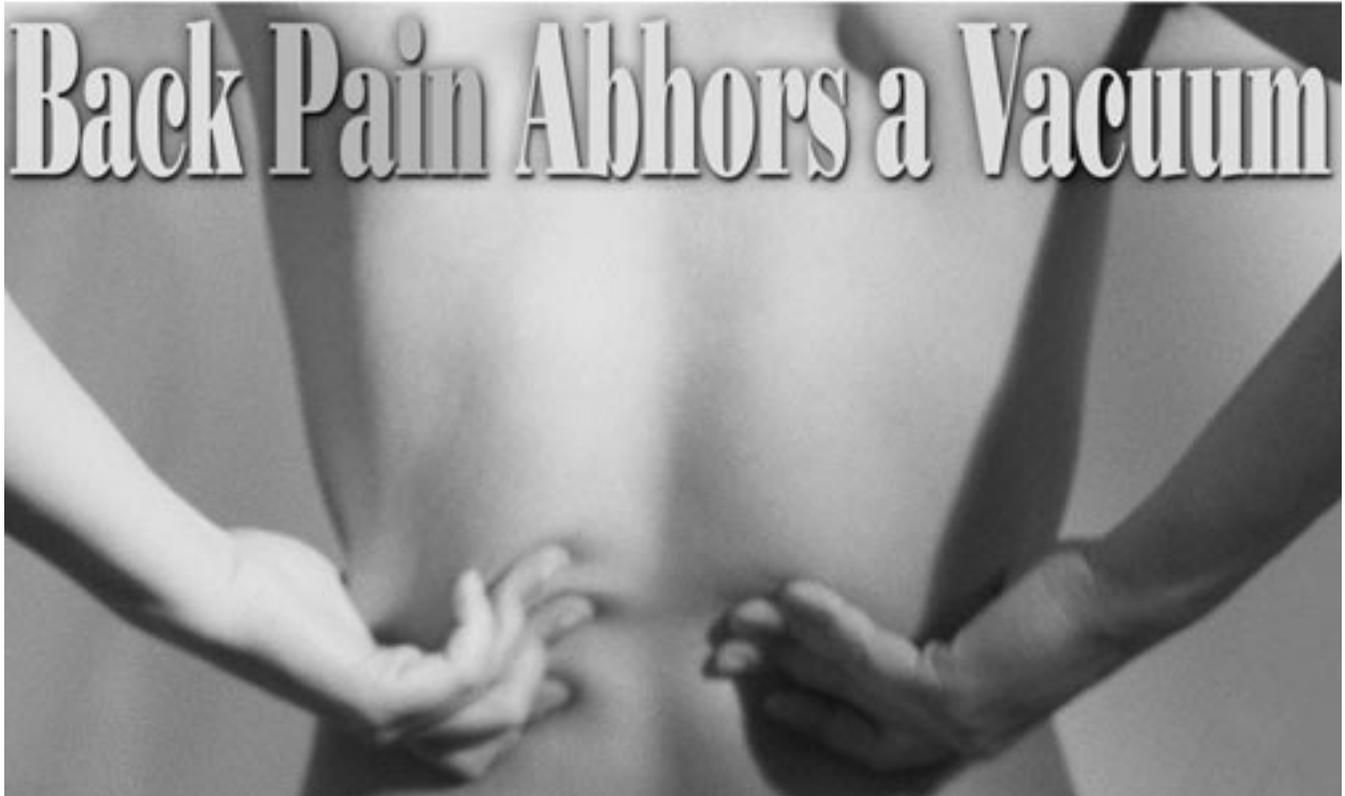
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BEST'S REVIEW

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Insurance Issues and Analysis

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A recent study says VAX-D therapy - disc decompression - should be considered a low-cost alternative to low-back surgery.

by Ron Panko

A study published in the April issue of *Neurological Research*, a peer-reviewed medical journal published in Wilton, Conn., considers vertebral axial decompression (VAX-D) therapy "a primary treatment modality" for low-back pain associated with lumbar disc herniation, degenerative disc disease and other low-back conditions.

"VAX-D by its unique design may more precisely address the physiology of persistent low-back pain than other conventional therapies," wrote authors Earl E. Gose, William K. Naguszewski and Robert K. Naguszewski. Gose is a neurologist at the University of Illinois at Chicago, while the Naguszewskis are neurologists with Coosa Medical Group, Rome, Ga.

The findings could have implications for health plans, given the pervasiveness of low-back pain and the high costs

of surgery. Subjects in the study reported increased low-back mobility and pain reduction following treatments, factors the authors said are important in workers' compensation.

VAX-D was developed in the 1970s and patented by Allan E. Dyer, M.D., Ph.D., the former Canadian Deputy Minister of Health, who also pioneered development of the heart defibrillator. It currently uses a protocol on a two-piece table that pulls the patient's injured disc back into place and takes pressure off the nerve roots.

FDA Approvals

VAX-D has won two approvals from the Food and Drug Administration, the first in 1989 for "providing a primary treatment modality for the management of pain and disability for patients presenting with incapacitating low-back