

# Advances in chronic back pain treatment

Too many people are putting up with chronic back and neck pain simply because they don't know about the innovative treatments now available.

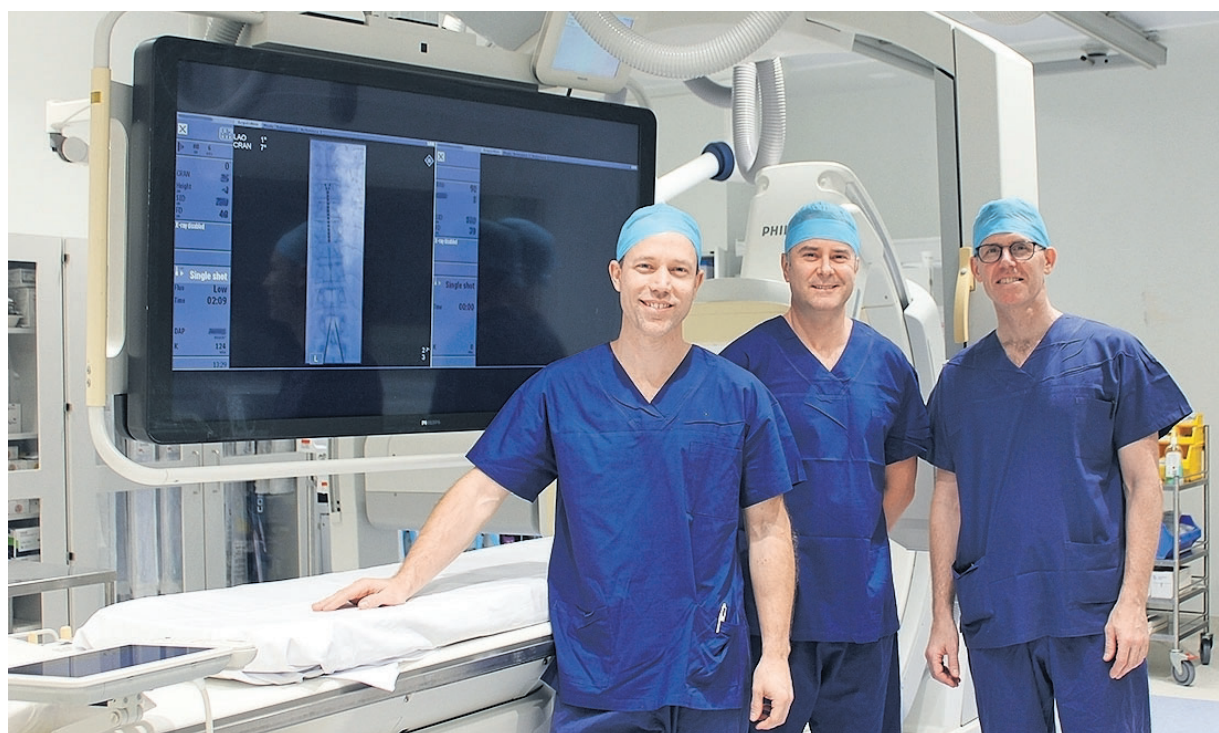
Dr Lewis Holford, interventional pain medicine specialist and director of the Northern Pain Centre at North Shore Private Hospital, says rapid developments in pain medicine can mean many patients are not aware of recent advances in treatment options.

There are two main groups of patients who may benefit from new treatment options. The first are patients who continue to suffer pain after surgery.

An estimated 10- to 40 per cent of patients who undergo spine surgery continue to have pain.

This can occur even in cases where the surgery was technically perfect and there is no evidence of complications.

In these patients, pain may have originally been due to issues such as instability or compression of a nerve. This may cause changes in the central nervous system – the brain and spinal cord – resulting in “central sensitisation” that causes persistent pain. Dr Holford says this may be treated with “spinal cord stimulation”, which involves placing two leads with electrodes into the



From left: Dr Nathan Taylor, Dr Lewis Holford and Associate Professor Charles Brooker at the Northern Pain Centre, North Shore Private Hospital.

space around the spinal cord and connecting them to a system that delivers a very small amount of electrical current, stimulating the nerves and altering the way the pain is processed.

The second group of patients are those whose quality of life is disrupted by pain however they do not wish to have surgery or may not be suitable for surgery. A common source of back pain in such patients is the lumbar facet joints. An established treatment which has recently been improved by technological advances is “radiofrequency facet joint denervation”, Dr Holford says. This involves “stunning” the small nerves that send pain signals from the joints to the brain, stopping them from transmitting the pain for between six

months and two years. “During that time, the patient can start physiotherapy and return to their normal activities,” he says.

“This helps prevent stiffness and deterioration in function.”

Dr Holford says the Northern Pain Centre offers a full range of interventional technologies. “Our team of interventional pain medicine specialists are at the forefront of medical advancements available in Australia and around the world. Using state-of-the-art facilities in North Shore Private Hospital, we perform these procedures to a very high standard and provide an excellent level of care.”

Patients benefit from the centre’s interdisciplinary approach, which integrates physiotherapy and clinical

psychology with patient care. “Pain is a physical and emotional experience,” he says. “Its role from an evolutionary point of view is to serve as a protective function.”

“With acute pain, these responses can be helpful, but with chronic pain they can have a very strong negative impact on your quality of life.

“Northern Pain Centre’s unique approach allows the interventional pain medicine specialist to tailor the treatment program to suit the individual patient’s needs, where all disciplines collaborate to offer the most effective treatment plan.”

Any surgical or invasive procedure carries risk. Before proceeding, seek a second opinion from an appropriately qualified health practitioner.

## SEEKING RELIEF FROM CHRONIC BACK PAIN?

Chronic back pain can be debilitating. It’s reassuring to know that technologically advanced treatments are available.

The Pain Medicine Specialists at Northern Pain Centre specialise in the interventional treatment of back, neck and neuropathic pain. Interventional treatment innovations include:

- Diagnostic Techniques • Radiofrequency Treatments
- Pulsed Radiofrequency Treatments • Spinal Cord Stimulation
- Regenerative Therapies

**Northern Pain Centre is Sydney’s largest private multidisciplinary pain clinic.**

Patients receive a comprehensive pain management plan led by the Pain Medicine Specialist, that draws from interventional procedures, medication management, multidisciplinary assessment and therapy.

If you experience chronic back, neck or knee pain, discuss this with your GP to determine if a consultation with a Pain Medicine Specialist at Northern Pain Centre is right for you. GP referral is required.

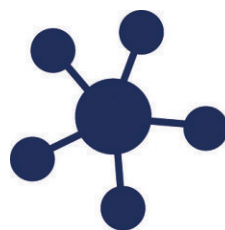
### OUR PRACTICE LOCATIONS:

**NORTH SHORE PRIVATE HOSPITAL**  
Suite 6, Level 4, North Shore Private Hospital, Westbourne Street, St Leonards NSW 2065

**NORTHERN BEACHES**  
Dale Street Medical Specialists, Unit 119/ 20 Dale Street, Brookvale NSW 2100

**NORWEST**  
Level 1, Suite 107, Q Central Building, 10 Norbrik Drive, Bella Vista NSW 2153

**CENTRAL COAST**  
Suite 202, Level 1, Element Building, 200 Central Coast Highway, Erina NSW 2250



**NORTHERN PAIN CENTRE**

For appointments or enquiries  
Call 02 9439 6456 • Fax 02 9460 9230  
Email [admin@northernpaincentre.com.au](mailto:admin@northernpaincentre.com.au)  
[www.northernpaincentre.com.au](http://www.northernpaincentre.com.au)

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