August 31, 2017

Dear Referring Providers:

We would like to thank all of you for your referrals to Mercy Neurosurgery. With this letter we hope to better facilitate the referral process, evaluate patients earlier and provide the best possible care. We have included information that you may find helpful when evaluating patients you are considering sending to our service. We hope this will help triage patients and determine if they additionally need to see other specialties concurrently. These specialties include physical therapy, pain clinicians, and physical medicine and rehab.

• **Axial Symptoms**: Generally patients with axial symptoms (pain in the back, neck and shoulder) are better served by physical therapy and pain clinic or physical medicine and rehab evaluation. (Exceptions would be axial symptoms due to instability or fractures).

• **Radiculopathy**: Patients with radiculopathies with or without sensory deficits are best served initially with triple concurrent regimen of physical therapy, epidural steroid injection and gabapentin. Typically 4-6 weeks of physical therapy is advised. If the patient has exhausted these measures without relief of symptoms a neurosurgery referral is recommended.

• **Cord Compression**: Patients with new motor deficits (weakness, gait disturbance) or new loss of bowel/bladder due to cord compression need to be seen by neurosurgery as soon as the problem is evident. These cases are considered more urgent so please call our office directly.

• **Imaging**: All patients require appropriate diagnostic imaging prior to a surgical referral. *No surgical decision can be made without them.* These images should not be more than one year old. MRI is the first choice; however, in cases where that is not possible, a CT myelogram is needed. Although invasive, it allows for us to properly visualize the neural elements and fully assess the patient.

Our goal is for patients to receive advantageous therapies sooner and relief of their symptoms. This can also expedite formulating the final surgical plan if needed. If you have questions please don’t hesitate to call our office. Again, we appreciate your referrals and thank you for your time.

Sincerely Mercy Neurosurgery,

*Dr. Einar Bogason, M.D.*
*Dr. John Gachiani, M.D.*
*Dr. Esmiralda Henderson, M. D.*
*Dr. Troy Munson, M.D.*