

## **Information for Obstetrical Patients Interested in Epidural Anesthesia Who Have a History of Harrington Rod Placement or Other Spinal Instrumentation**

All expectant mothers are interested in how they will approach the discomfort that accompanies labor and delivery. Understandably this can produce a great deal of anxiety as one awaits childbirth. Fortunately, today there are a number of modalities available to patients to help deal with the pain associated with labor and delivery.

By far and away the most popular method is lumbar epidural anesthesia. Over the past three decades this has proved to be an effective and safe means of pain control and in many locals has become the gold standard.

The good news is that, in patients who have had Harrington Rod placement or other spinal instrumentation, lumbar epidural anesthesia may still be a possible means of pain control. There are a few things that each patient should be aware of when making this decision.

First, if an epidural is attempted, it may not provide perfect pain relief. It may provide one sided, partial, or spotty relief. In fact, a certain number of patients with epidurals and a history of back surgery will have very poor pain relief from epidural anesthesia. Patients whose surgery extends far down into the lumbar or sacral regions are at higher risk of having a failed epidural.

Other risks of an attempted epidural are "wet tap", and also a remote chance of infection. Infection of implanted hardware, however rare, would be a very serious complication.

If you have a failed epidural, or chose not to have an epidural because of a history of extensive spine surgery, there are other options that can be used for pain control. A type of spinal using narcotics or a combination of narcotics and local anesthetics may be used and have been shown to be very effective in some patients. Another possible approach to pain control is intravenous medications. This does not eliminate all pain but makes pain easier to tolerate.

You may choose to visit the anesthesiologist covering labor and delivery before you go into labor to review your history and answer any questions you may have. This may be arranged through your obstetrician or by calling the OB Triage at Greenville Memorial Hospital. Please remember to bring any X-Ray films or medical information pertaining to your back surgery.