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Michael J. Kellis, D.O., *Director of Sports Medicine*
Geauga Regional Hospital, University Hospital Systems

Non-Surgical Spinal Decompression

Offering Relief to Patients Suffering from Herniated and Degenerative Disc Diseases

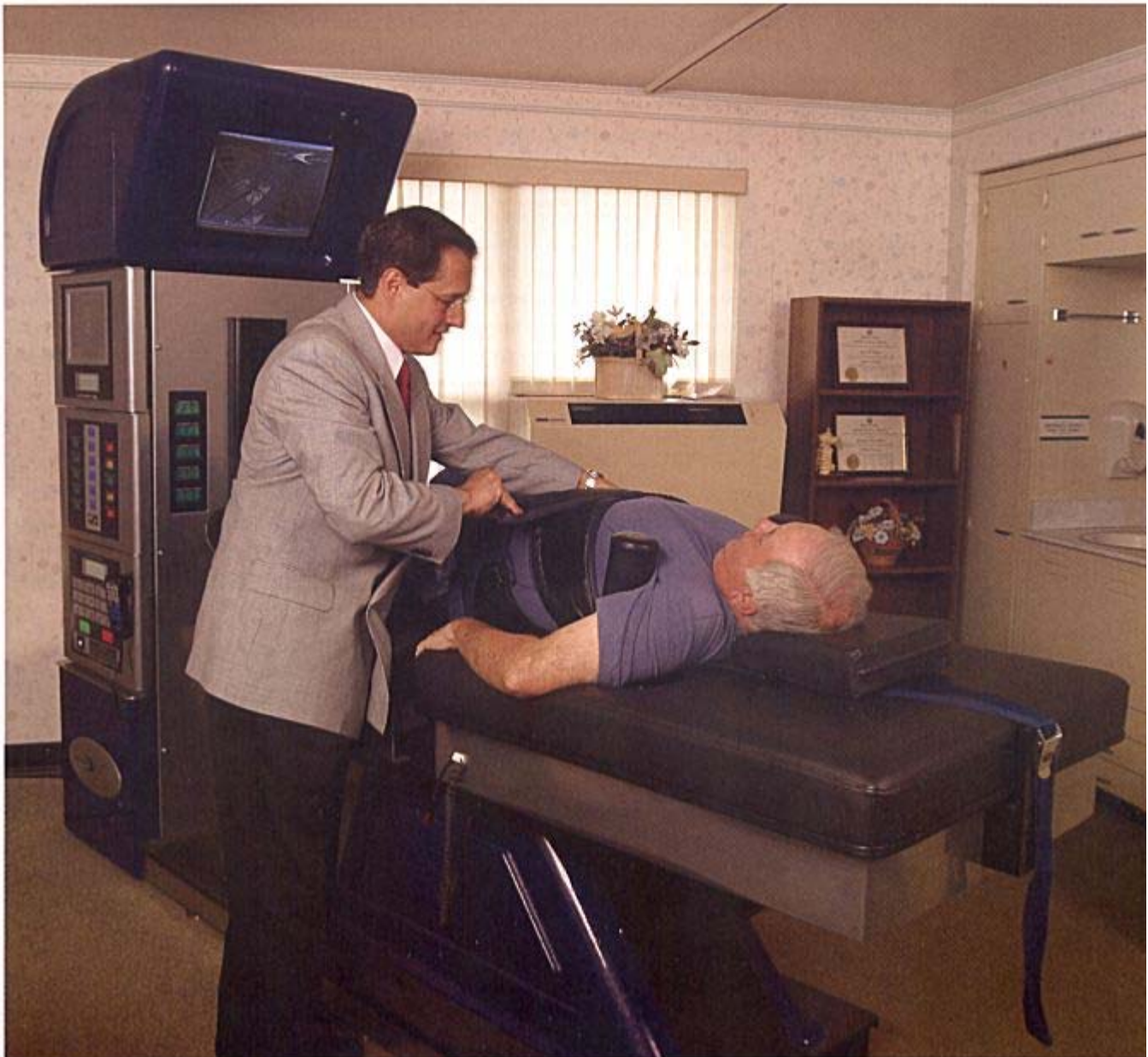
cover story

Non-Surgical Spinal Decompression...

Offering Relief to Patients

Suffering from Herniated and Degenerative Disc Disease

By Kimberly Bonvissuto



Dr. Kellis prepares Bill Polk for his 30 minute session on the DRX9000, noting that proper patient positioning is vital to achieving spinal decompression. Clinical studies have shown that the DRX9000 effectively creates negative intradiscal pressure within the disc space at specific lumbar disc levels.

Today, low back pain is one of the most significant health problems facing Americans, according to the National Institutes of Health. With 85 percent of all people having back pain at some time in their lives, NIH notes that back pain is the most frequent cause of activity limitation in people less than 45 years of age. But thanks to a new technology, Michael J. Kellis, D.O., is able to offer his patients a highly effective, non-surgical solution to this growing health concern.

As the director of Geauga Sports Medicine, Dr. Michael J. Kellis specializes in non-surgical orthopedics and sports medicine. Affiliated with the University Hospitals Health System and Geauga Regional Hospital in Chardon, OH, Dr. Kellis and his colleagues strive to provide the most innovative treatments available to healthcare providers.

Through his group practice, Precision Orthopedic Specialties, Dr. Kellis and his six colleagues—Amardeep S. Chauhan, D.O., Robert S. Nishime, M.D., Mark J. Mendeszoon, D.P.M., Gregory C. Sarkisian, D.O., George J. Kellis, M.D., and Jeffrey E. Shall, M.D.—offer a multi-specialty approach to treating patients with disease or injury to the musculoskeletal system. As one of the largest volume practices in Northeast Ohio with more than 300 patients seen daily, the group specializes in orthopedic surgery, joint replacement, sports medicine, spine surgery, podiatry, and pain management.

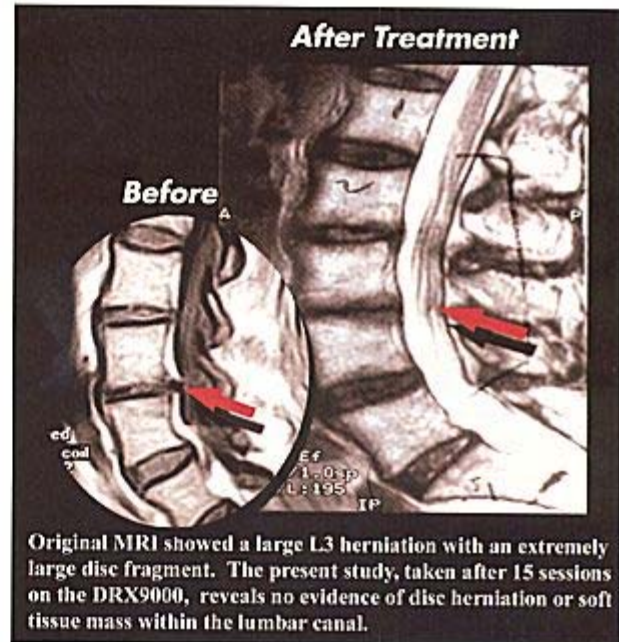
In the fall of 2001, while attending a sports medicine conference in California, Dr. Kellis came across a new technology—the DRX 9000—which treats herniated and degenerative discs through non-surgical spinal decompression. Intrigued by the clinical results of this technology, Dr. Kellis researched the treatment and found that he could effectively treat his patients with over an 86 percent success rate for debilitating back pain.

Over 10 years ago, NASA was the first to investigate the effects of spinal decompression on intervertebral discs during space travel. It found that astronauts were relieved of low back pain in the anti-gravity state. In addition, it was found that the disc height was actually increased during a space mission. The question then became how to successfully reproduce the environment here on earth.

Axiom Worldwide, a medical manufacturing company located in Tampa, FL, answered the question. By combining proven scientific principles along with the latest technological developments, their specialized team of physicians and medical engineers developed a system that could decompress lumbar discs relieving pressure on the spinal nerves caused by disc herniations, degenerative disc disease, sciatica and posterior facet syndrome.

With the DRX9000 system's advanced computerized technology, Dr. Kellis is now able to offer his patients an efficacious treatment for low back pain. Proprietary software allows his clinic to record daily treatments for proper documentation and accurate patient monitoring in compliance with HIPPA regulations. The automatic shoulder support system helps to stabilize the patient's upper body. While the DRX9000 automatically adjusts to the proper angle of distraction, a lordotic air bladder system acts as a fulcrum to the angle of pull, allowing Dr. Kellis to target specific lumbar discs. The distraction forces utilize a logarithmic curve to avoid proprioceptor response, which would create muscle spasm. The split table design decreases friction and allows separation of the vertebra, minimizing the effect of gravity, explains Dr. Kellis.

"Unlike traction, which pulls both muscle and spine, the DRX9000



Original MRI showed a large L3 herniation with an extremely large disc fragment. The present study, taken after 15 sessions on the DRX9000, reveals no evidence of disc herniation or soft tissue mass within the lumbar canal.

applies forces to decrease intradiscal pressure and enhance fluid diffusion to the discs. Expanding the space between the bones restores nutrients and blood flow to the disc, which encourages healing," says Dr. Kellis. His patients describe the treatment as a gentle, intermittent pulling on the spine. Further noting that some patients even relax to the point of falling asleep during a treatment.

Patients typically undergo a series of 15 to 20 treatment sessions; each treatment lasts between 30 and 45 minutes, depending on diagnosis. Just before treatment, heat and myofascial release is applied for 30 minutes to minimize muscle spasms. Following a session, a cold pack is applied with electrical muscle stimulation.

Bill Polk of Painesville, OH, hurt his lower back in 2001 during a game of racquetball, which he claims to have won. After several months of unsuccessful treatment, Bill's chiropractor referred him to Dr. Kellis for more intensive therapy. Bill was suffering from degenerative disc disease and severe arthritis. After undergoing the initial treatment protocol on the DRX9000, Bill is pain-free and down to only one treatment session per month for maintenance.

"As long as I can keep him on the golf course, he's happy," says Dr. Kellis. Bill quickly responded by giving his doctor a thumbs-up.

Dr. Kellis has seen countless success stories like that of Bill Polk. "Spinal decompression," explains Dr. Kellis "is recognized as an effective treatment to avoid back surgery," though Dr. Kellis himself was a skeptic until he visited Axiom Worldwide's manufacturing facility. For him, seeing is believing. He observed before-and-after MRIs, which showed retraction of the size and extent of herniations after treatment, as well as healing and an increased hydration of the disc space.

After extensive investigation into other decompression units on the market, Dr. Kellis concluded the DRX9000 was, in fact, the most technologically advanced system. "After only two days in Florida, I bought one," states Dr. Kellis. He set the machine up in the Sports Therapy

Department at Geauga Regional Hospital. "This is a phenomenal new technology for non-surgically decompressing a spinal segment. It's a non-surgical way of getting people back to work quickly."

Over the last year, Dr. Kellis says he has achieved a high success rate treating patients with spinal decompression therapy. Clinical studies show up to an 86 percent success rate. The DRX9000 is effective in treating low back pain and has helped his patients avoid surgery. Dr. Kellis is so pleased with his patient's clinical results he anxiously awaits the arrival of his DRX9000C, Axiom Worldwide's new cervical decompression system.

After using the DRX9000, Dr. Kellis says the recurrence rate for lower back pain in his patients is less than five percent after one year. Most patients who fail to respond to the treatment don't follow prescribed treatment protocols, including exercise and nutrition programs. In those cases, Dr. Kellis starts the treatments over again, but emphasizes the need for those patients to change their lifestyles or face a visit with the surgeon.

He advises patients to quit smoking, cut down on caffeine and alcohol, lose weight and take nutritional vitamins. Dr. Kellis also refers his patients to Geauga Regional Hospital's physical therapy unit following their treatments to learn abdominal and back strengthening exercises to avoid future strain.

"If you abuse yourself long enough, the body will rebel," says Dr. Kellis. "Patients have to take responsibility for their own healthcare."

Dr. Kellis, who adopts a hands-on style of treatment, said his group practice offers a multi-specialty approach to back pain. After the initial diagnosis, patients are placed on a treatment protocol utilizing the DRX9000. If surgery is necessary, there are two highly skilled spine

surgeons in the practice, one of whom is Dr. Kellis' brother. With the group's purchase of the DRX9000, Dr. Kellis said he has one more effective option for his patients.

"Once you remove the pressure from the disc, you go back and strengthen the disc," explains Dr. Kellis. "The DRX9000 is a tool, not a cure-all. It's a tool to help people get better without surgery."

Dr. Kellis says the machine is a win-win situation for patients who qualify for the treatment, which is approved by most insurance companies. He added that older patients who are not good surgical candidates might be able to use the DRX9000 as an effective option. "It's a wonderful way of keeping my patients out of surgery," says Dr. Kellis. The treatment's contraindications are pregnancy, fractures, diffuse osteoporosis, malignancies or cancers of the bone.

Dr. Kellis' first experience with long-term pain came in high school when a sporting accident left him with a knee injury. Sports medicine did not exist then as it does today, so he spent 10 years living with the pain before technology caught up and offered him relief.

Intrigued by the possibilities technology offered in the medical field, Dr. Kellis chose a career in medicine. After receiving his degree from Ohio University College of Osteopathic Medicine, he began his life-long commitment of working with patients helping them achieve optimal health. Dr. Kellis received the Distinguished Service Award from the American Osteopathic Association and is listed in the *Who's Who in the World* and *Who's Who in Medicine*. He also was named among *Cleveland Magazine's* "Fifty Most Interesting People".

Dr. Kellis' involvement with his patients doesn't end at his office door. As a medical missionary, he has volunteered countless hours in both Greece and Mexico. Currently, he is serving as the president and is founder of the Friends of St. Michael, a non-profit organization dedicated to helping churches throughout the world. Locally, Dr. Kellis serves as the director of the Christmas toy drive at Geauga Regional Hospital—named by Solucient as one of the "100 Top Hospitals: Benchmarks for Success Class of 2001"—and is a volunteer director for various philanthropic functions for the American Cancer Society.

Between his community involvement and medical practice, Dr. Kellis is a busy man. His group practice, Precision Orthopaedic Specialties, has five locations in Northeast Ohio. They recently opened a Chardon office that houses family physicians, general surgeons and ophthalmologists. The opening has special significance to Dr. Kellis, who now works with both of his brothers—George Kellis, M.D., an orthopedic surgeon, and Augustine Kellis, M.D., an ophthalmologist and plastic surgeon for the eye.

"We all trained in the Cleveland area and decided to stay local," says Dr. Kellis, adding that he and his brothers always dreamed of practicing together.

Walking down the hallways in the hospital's Sports Medicine Department, Dr. Kellis doesn't let anyone pass without a friendly hello, a pat on the back or a handshake. Colleagues and patients feel equal in Dr. Kellis' presence.

"My patients are my family. That's the way I've practiced for 15 years."

For more information on the DRX9000, call Axiom Worldwide at 1-877-438-0663 or visit their Web site at www.axiomworldwide.com. ■

Along with a substantial reduction in pain, one of the immediate effects of spinal decompression is an increase in the patient's range of motion.

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