



NEWSLETTER #146 December 2025 See [ABOUT WIKISTIM](#)

"Nonsurgical refractory back pain [sic]"

So-called "nonsurgical refractory back pain" (NSRBP) is in the news this month by virtue of two new publications (Eldabe and North 2025; Kallewaard et al. 2025). For those unfamiliar with (or still puzzled by) the term, it refers to persistent low back pain with no surgically remediable, plausible cause. As detailed in the references in these new publications, it is also known as persistent spinal pain syndrome (PSPS), type 1. More useful and meaningful are the observations that it is fundamentally just a symptom, the objective basis for which is poorly understood, and that it is quite common.

NSRBP is newsworthy to the neuromodulation community because it can be treated successfully with spinal cord stimulation. This month's editorial by Eldabe and North accompanies the third published US-based multicenter randomized controlled trial reporting a high rate of success with SCS, and the meta-analysis by Kallewaard et al. shows that this is consistent across published studies as a whole, including all SCS waveforms and control schemes, old and new.

NSRBP is so commonplace that the "good news" about SCS, which is far from inexpensive, might be too much of a good thing. We have been challenged over many years to show that neuromodulation is cost-effective, and a growing body of literature provides evidence of such cost-effectiveness. At the same time, however, public concern is growing about the "affordability" of our lifestyles in general and health care in particular. How will we prepare to meet this renewed challenge?

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Deep Brain Stimulation (now 9487 citations)

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