

In Response

Thank you for providing us the opportunity to respond to the letter by Dr. Zhang discussing further ways to evaluate the cost-benefit of vertebral augmentation within the hospital inpatient population. Proving the cost-benefit of vertebral augmentation (VA) in this particular group of patients can be challenging as the majority of the costs are incurred during their hospitalization and the majority of the benefits are likely accumulated over the longer term through lower readmission rates, higher rates of home discharge, and a higher functional quality of life. As was the case in our study, multiple factors can complicate this analysis including delayed identification of inpatients who may benefit from VA, multiple medical comorbidities, and discharge planning issues delaying care. We applaud the continued efforts by Dr. Zhang and others who continue to study this issue. If VA is in fact cost-effective and beneficial to inpatients with vertebral compression fractures, it should be considered a first-line treatment, rather than a salvage therapy when medical treatment has failed.

Jonathan Flug, MD
Assistant Professor of Radiology
University of Colorado School of Medicine

Mail Stop 8200
12631 East 17th Avenue
Aurora, Colorado 80045
E-mail: Jonathan.Flug@gmail.com

Ann Hanford, MA, RN
Assistant Vice President
Case Management & Quality Metrics
535 East 70th Street
New York, NY 10021
Winthrop University Hospital
Mineola, NY
E-mail: ahanford@winthrop.org

Orlando Ortiz, MD
Chairman
Department of Radiology
Professor of Clinical Radiology
Stony Brook University
School of Medicine
Stony Brook, NY
E-mail: oortiz@winthrop.org