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## Letter to the Editor

# Spinal fusion is often appropriate

Published: November 1

As a board-certified neurosurgeon and spine surgeon, I take exception to the general conclusions drawn in the Oct. 28 front-page article "[Boom in spinal fusions questioned.](#)"

The article stated that "the rapid rise of spinal fusions in the United States, especially for diagnoses that generally don't require the procedure, has raised questions from experts about whether, amid medical uncertainty, the financial rewards are spurring the boom." This implies dishonest and unethical behavior on the part of surgeons and is particularly offensive to the vast majority of surgeons, including me, who are doing what we can to help our patients who are suffering.

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The article failed to explore the degree to which this issue is driven by consumers who are in pain and desire a better quality of life. Nor did it mention that cortisone injections and physical therapy visits for back pain have skyrocketed, costing Medicare billions each year.

As the article correctly stated, surgery is not appropriate for every patient who has back pain, nor is spinal fusion necessary for every patient requiring surgery. Nonetheless, patients need access to the full range of options for treating spinal disorders, including fusion.

**Brian R. Subach, Reston**

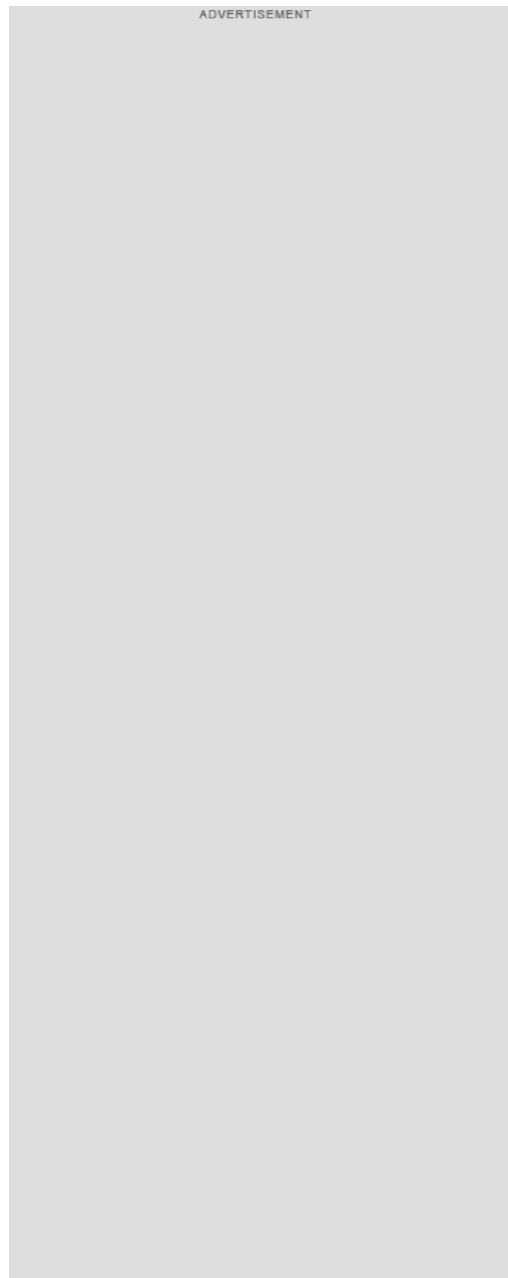
The writer is president of the Virginia Spine Institute.

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