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Neuromodulation Society
of Australia and
New Zealand



A chapter of the International Neuromodulation Society **ins**



NSANZ calls for a collaborative but independent device registry for spinal cord stimulators.

The ABC 4 Corners program entitled “The Pain Factory” that was aired Monday night contained a series of allegations around one aspect of neuromodulation, namely spinal cord stimulation - and featured Dr Rachel David calling for this therapy to be removed from the suite of options available for patients suffering intractable neuropathic pain, primarily on the basis of privately held data of the health funds she represents and advocates for.

Criticisms were made of the Therapeutic Goods Administration that were neither substantiated nor rationally based.

The Neuromodulation Society of Australia and New Zealand would like to see a rational and sensible discussion of the evidence base for the role of spinal cord stimulation in refractory neuropathic pain which has the highest level of evidence of efficacy and is performed in a very small minority of suitable patients for whom other options have either been exhausted or are unsuitable. It is performed by highly trained medical specialists and is a therapy that intrinsically requires ongoing care and maintenance much like a pacemaker or an insulin pump requires ongoing care and maintenance. Without doubt, as surgery is involved, complications can and do occur and every complication is one more than is ever desired and we empathise with the patients presented and their particular lived experiences.

NSANZ and associated bodies such as the Faculty of Pain Medicine and the Royal Australian College of Surgeons are committed to the highest level of education, training, research and clinical governance to minimise complications.

Fundamental to further improvements is the production of nationally endorsed clinical guidelines which NSANZ is undertaking in partnership with stakeholders as well as a national registry to produce high quality VERIFIED outcomes that will form the basis of ongoing and continuous quality improvement. NSANZ - along with major stakeholders such as the Faculty of Pain Medicine - is committed to the roll out of an independent national neuromodulation registry.

In contrast to sensationalist claims, no other country’s healthcare system has any plans to deregister this therapy for either lack of efficacy or complication rates. Medical devices are appropriately carefully and tightly regulated by the TGA in Australia to ensure safety for all Australians.

The provision of access to and availability of pain treatments in Australia remains woefully under resourced and what this sector needs is sensible, rational discussion and support - rather than the approach taken by Private Healthcare Australia and the ABC in the 4 Corners report.

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