

# IV Corticosteroids Didn't Do Much for Sciatica

BY TIMOTHY F. KIRN  
Sacramento Bureau

SAN ANTONIO — A single, intravenous injection of methylprednisolone performed just slightly better than placebo in alleviating pain from acute discogenic sciatica, Axel Finckh, M.D., said at the annual meeting of the American College of Rheumatology.

Dr. Finckh presented a study in which 59 patients with radiographically con-

firmed discogenic sciatica were randomized to either a single, 500-mg, intravenous bolus of methylprednisolone or to placebo, and then followed for 10 days.

Both groups had significant improvement in pain on the first day, as shown with a 100-point, visual analog scale, with a greater mean improvement for the methylprednisolone group.

However, mean scores in both groups were about the same by the third day and remained comparable through day 10. Both

groups had gradual diminishment of pain from day 3 onward, said Dr. Finckh, of Brigham and Women's Hospital, Boston.

Nor were response rates significantly different on a straight leg test for radicular irritation, a McGill Pain Score for global pain, a flexibility score, and a functional disability questionnaire.

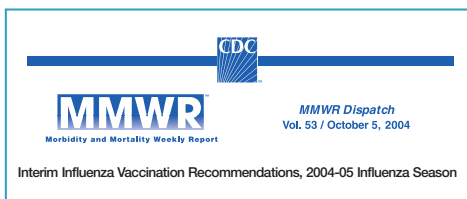
Patients in the study had all had sciatica for at least 1 week and not more than 6 weeks before treatment. Use of NSAIDs was permitted.

The use of corticosteroids in sciatica is controversial, Dr. Finckh said. Most studies of oral administration have not demonstrated any benefit. Some studies of epidural administration, however, have shown positive findings. His group conducted the study because they hypothesized that giving the corticosteroid intravenously might be a way to achieve high drug levels quickly, without the risks and pain typically associated with epidural administration. ■



## Vaccines: The Facts

### FluMist®—appropriate for most healthcare workers



This flu season, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) encourages the use of intranasally administered, live, attenuated influenza vaccine, if available, for healthy nonpregnant people ages 5 to 49 years, including most healthcare workers and those caring for children aged <6 months.<sup>3</sup> To learn more about the influenza vaccine recommendations, go to [www.cdc.gov/flu](http://www.cdc.gov/flu).

### A demonstrated safety profile

In placebo-controlled clinical trials, the most common solicited adverse events in the indicated population (n=2,762) included runny nose/nasal congestion,

headache, cough, sore throat, tiredness/weakness, irritability, decreased activity, and muscle aches.

FluMist® is contraindicated in persons with hypersensitivity to any component of the vaccine, including eggs; in children and adolescents receiving aspirin therapy or aspirin-containing therapy; in individuals with a history of Guillain-Barré syndrome; and in individuals with known or suspected immune deficiency. The safety and efficacy of FluMist® have not been established in pregnant women or for patients with chronic underlying medical conditions, including asthma or reactive airways disease; the vaccine should not be administered to these patients.

For indications and usage, dosage and administration, and safety information, see the Brief Summary on the adjacent page.

For more information, visit [flumist.com](http://flumist.com).

REFERENCES: 1. Prescribing Information for FluMist®, Influenza Virus Vaccine Live, Intranasal. MedImmune Vaccines, Inc., Gaithersburg, MD. 2. Flu drug maker MedImmune posts wider loss [press release]. College Park, Md: Associated Press; October 21, 2004. Available at: [http://biz.yahoo.com/ap/041021/earns\\_medimmune\\_5.html](http://biz.yahoo.com/ap/041021/earns_medimmune_5.html). Accessed: January 4, 2005. 3. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Interim Influenza Vaccination Recommendations—2004–05 Influenza Season. Available at: [www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/whoshouldget.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/whoshouldget.htm). Accessed November 2, 2004.

Manufactured and Marketed by:  
**MedImmune Vaccines, Inc.**  
Gaithersburg, MD 20878  
U.S. Govt. License 1652  
©2005 MedImmune Vaccines, Inc.

**fluMist**  
Influenza Virus Vaccine  
Live, Intranasal

January 2005 FLU04-250