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The anatomy of spinal injuries

Spinal injuries are common after car wrecks but can be difficult to diagnose specifically.

With any injury to the spine, prompt treatment and multiple imaging studies can reduce the possibility of permanent nerve damage, and complying with medical, surgical, or chiropractic care is essential. You should never ignore the onset or the persistent lingering of nervous symptoms after an injury and be sure to mention them to your doctor as soon as possible.



The Complex Nature of the Spine

The spine is a column of supportive bones, or vertebrae, that protect the spinal cord and provide support to the body and skeleton. There are 31 vertebrae (24 are moveable) with an attendant 31 nerves that exit the vertebral column at each level and provide motor and sensory control of the body. Between the vertebrae are soft cartilage structures called discs, supported by many ligaments, tendons and muscles. Sensory nerves exit the spinal cord between the vertebrae. The ones that exit the front of the column (ventral nerves) provide motor control of the body. The ones that exit the back of the spine (dorsal nerves) provide sensation to the body.

In addition, there are eight cervical nerves named C1 to C8, 12 thoracic nerves named T1 to T12, five lumbar nerves named L1 to L5, five sacral nerves named S1 to S5, and one coccygeal nerve. Injury to the spine can involve damage to any of these structures and can cause pain, paralysis, loss of sensation or impaired mobility, either temporarily or permanently.

Common spinal injuries can include whiplash, ruptured discs, pinched nerves, and less frequently, spinal fractures. If you or a loved one has suffered a spinal injury as a result of a car wreck, call our office to speak with one of our experienced injury attorneys. Your initial consultation with us is completely free. ■

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WHAT OUR CLIENTS ARE SAYING

Lindsay and Sara were fantastic to work with and everyone at the firm was knowledgeable, informative, and able to relate to me in a way so that I could understand my options. I feel that the Dover Law Firm got the best offer we could get and did a great job explaining everything to me.

Vanessa C. Rowell
Woodstock, GA

The bionic eye is here

When it comes to eye diseases, once any measure of sight is lost, it's gone forever. However, that may be about to change.

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) recently approved the Argus II Retinal Prosthesis System (manufactured by Second Sight Medical Products) for the treatment of late-stage retinitis pigmentosa—a rare, inherited eye disease that damages the retina and leads to blindness. The Argus II system is comprised of a small video camera and transmitter mounted on eyeglasses. The camera converts images into electronic data, which is transmitted to electrodes implanted in the patient's retina. From

there, the data is routed through the optic nerve and on to the brain. Essentially, the system bypasses the damaged retina.

The marvelous complexity and vision of the natural eye cannot be duplicated currently; eyesight gained from the system may be as simple as differentiating light from dark, distinguishing boundaries between objects, or reading large letters. Though these improvements might seem like baby steps to some, for those with retinitis pigmentosa, these seemingly small advances are a giant leap forward. Many can now be more mobile and engage in a much wider array of day-to-day activities.

The FDA has approved the Argus II system under the banner of "humanitarian use," which means it is used for a disease that affects fewer than 4,000 people in the United States, but who have no other treatment alternatives.

This breakthrough has been over 20 years in the making. It is hoped that the Argus II system will eventually be approved for future use for other sight-limiting conditions, such as macular degeneration, which affects over 2 million Americans. ■



Q: I missed a couple of treatments for my injuries after my car wreck...is that a big deal?

A: Yes, gaps in treatment after an auto accident can be devastating to your claim. Insurance companies and defense lawyers love it when you miss appointments; they will say that you must not have been hurt too badly or else you would have gone to all of your appointments and kept up with your treatments.

Missing your appointments because of financial issues is also a problem because those types of issues may not be able to be brought up at trial based on evidence rules.

One more thing – if you find if you are feeling better, don't just stop your treatments; talk to your doctor and follow his or her orders and recommended treatment plan all the way through or you may cause problems with your injury claim. ■





CASE RECAP

A New Jersey resident was visiting relatives in Atlanta for the holidays and looking forward to a family trip to the Georgia Aquarium when his outing was cut short by a serious car wreck. He was riding as a passenger in the family's vehicle when the driver of a commercial tractor-trailer attempted a dangerous left turn in front of the family's vehicle, causing a major collision. The wreck left the NJ resident with a serious injury to his left eye, and he decided to retain our firm to represent him.

When the insurance company was unwilling to appropriately compensate the truck accident victim, our attorneys went to New Jersey to take depositions of several of our client's medical doctors. After fighting the case over a 2-day trial in DeKalb County, we won a jury verdict for \$600,000, which was more than \$200,000 above the insurance company's last offer to settle. ■

Not all lung cancers are the same

Eighty-five to 90 percent of lung cancer deaths involve smokers; however, there is still that 10–15 percent chunk that does not – an estimated 15,000 Americans each year. If “never smokers” lung cancer was its own class of disease, it would be the sixth-most common cause of cancer deaths.

Radon is the leading cause of lung cancer in nonsmokers, followed by secondhand smoke. But even after you factor in these two causes, there is still a significant number of never-smokers who come down with lung cancer.

There seem to be distinguishing characteristics between smokers with lung cancer and never-smokers with lung cancer. A majority of smokers develop squamous cell cancers, which tend to grow near airways and cause symptoms earlier in the process. Never-smokers more often develop adenocarcinomas, which grow in the outer regions of the lungs and don't display symptoms until after the cancer is much more involved. A third type of lung cancer, bronchoalveolar carcinoma, is on the rise worldwide, especially among young, female nonsmokers.

Currently, lung cancer treatments are the same for smokers as for never-smok-



ers. This methodology is changing with the findings that lung cancer in never-smokers is different from lung cancer in smokers—on a genetic, cellular, and molecular level. Some studies suggest never-smokers respond better to chemotherapy. Certain genetic mutations are more prevalent in the cells of never-smokers; thus, targeted therapies that fixate solely on these mutations may become more common. There may be an inherited component to never-smokers' lung cancer as well.

Recognizing the fact that lung cancers aren't all the same bodes well for those who are nonsmokers.

As with any cancer, early detection is the key. If you or a loved one has been diagnosed with lung cancer and feel that it should have been caught earlier, you should contact an experienced Georgia medical malpractice attorney to discuss your situation. ■

LEGAL TERMS EXPLAINED:

Comparative Negligence

According to Georgia comparative negligence law, a plaintiff can recover damages in an injury claim only if he or she was not 50 percent or more at fault for the accident. In other words, if you are at least 50 percent responsible for an accident, you will not be able to receive money for your injuries. ■



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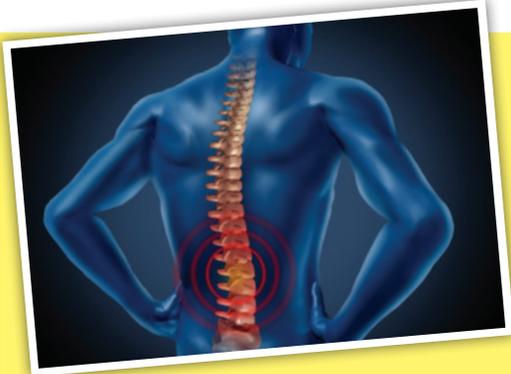
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Staff member spotlight

At the Dover Law Firm, we're fortunate to have a terrific staff in place to help our clients navigate their personal injury, medical malpractice and workers' compensation claims. We'd like you to get to know a little bit more about the individuals who make up our team, and from time to time, we're going to spotlight one of our staff members in our newsletter. This issue our spotlight is on **Lindsay Langan, an Administrative Assistant** who has been with us for 2 years.

Born: Springfield, Illinois. Yes, I grew up in a cornfield!

Lives: Canton, Georgia

Family: Married my college sweetheart, Gabe. Blessed with a sweet baby boy, Graham, age 3.

Pets: I'm allergic to cats and dogs! ☹️

College: University of West Georgia; B.A. in Marketing

First Job: Linens n Things in high school

What's on your iPod? Mostly country music – Rascal Flatts, Carrie Underwood, Jason Aldean.

What are you reading? The Dover Law Firm Newsletter ;)

Favorite place to visit: Disney World!!!!

Like to do when not at work: I love going to the movies!

Favorite sports team:
Atlanta Braves

Favorite TV Show:
Duck Dynasty and Revenge

What's on your bucket list? A train trip across the United States.

Favorite quote: 'I love you so much, I want you to know.' – Tickle Monster by Josie Bissett (my son's favorite book)

Surprising fact about you: When I was 10, I went to the Junior Olympics in swimming...but my swimming these days is confined to the shallow end of the kiddie pool! ■

