

# An Aching Back Leads To a Remarkable Career

**D**r. Catherine Duncan is an accomplished interventional pain specialist who can thank pain for setting her on the path of a remarkable career.

"When I was attending Baldwin Wallace College in Ohio, many years ago, I was a classical guitar major and I was having a great deal of pain in my back. Fortunately, a friend's father was a DO—an osteopathic physician—and he manipulated my back on a few occasions and quite amazingly my pain simply disappeared.

"I got my music degree and moved to Chicago where I was an editor of a classical guitar magazine, and for some time I was living my dream. But in fact I increasingly had a strong pull to go into medicine as a career, and because of this earlier experience my interest focused exclusively on osteopathic medicine.

"And the more I learned about it," she recalls, "the more attractive it became. Along with traditional medical training, osteopathic students take about 200 additional hours of training in the art of osteopathic manipulative medicine. It's a system designed to help alleviate pain and support healthy body function.

"And thus, I graduated from the Ohio University College of Osteopathic Medicine, and pursuing my interest in pain relief, I completed the residency program in physical medicine and rehabilitation at Case Western Reserve University, aligned with the MetroHealth Medical Center in Cleveland. Thus I've been actively involved in treating patients with pain and disabilities for well over 20 years."

As she gained high levels of competence in her specialty, Dr. Duncan achieved board certification by the American Board of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, the American Osteopathic Board of Rehabilitation Medicine, and in the subspecialty of Pain Medicine.

Prior to opening her own practice at Atlantic Spine and Pain, aided by her husband Will's full-time expertise and support, Dr. Duncan held a number of medical directorships including at the Carolina Back Institute in Cary. She is a member in good standing of the American Academy of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, the American Osteopathic College of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, the American Osteopathic Association, and the International Spine Intervention Society.



Fluoroscopic guided injections are one of more than a dozen approaches available to Dr. Duncan on the path to pain relief for her patients.

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With 100 percent less pain at 65  
than I had at age 40."**

## MANY APPROACHES

"As a specialist in Interventional Pain Management," she notes, "I use a combination of modalities to help reduce pain, improve function, and achieve wellness. These include fluoroscopic guided spinal injections (*see photo*), ultrasound guided joint and nerve blocks, Botox injections for chronic daily headache, viscosupplementation for osteoarthritis, Osteopathic Manual Medicine, and regenerative therapies."

Further, Dr. Duncan is one of only a very few physicians in North Carolina offering prolotherapy for musculoskeletal conditions. "Prolo" is short for proliferation," she explains, "because this treatment causes the growth, or proliferation, of new ligament tissue in areas where it has become weak."


Dr. Duncan also works closely with other health care providers, such as physical therapists, acupuncturists, personal trainers, mental health specialists and chiropractors, to maximize well-being, building a network support team over the past 15 years.

Her expertise extends to many therapeutic approaches, including EMG/nerve conduction velocity studies, epidural steroid injections, facet joint injections, fluoroscopic guided injections, joint injections, occipital nerve blocks, peripheral nerve blocks, radiofrequency ablation, sacroiliac injections, selective nerve root blocks, spinal cord stimulation, trigger point injections, ultrasound guided injections, and viscosupplementation.

Dr. Duncan has a legion of patients who happily attest to her special gifts in relieving pain. One of them is her husband, Will Duncan.

"I'm 65," he notes, "and I injured my back when I was 19, working in a steel mill in Cleveland. I had low-back pain most of my life. I took up martial arts

when I was 23, and that kept me in fairly good shape, but I would have periods of about a week out of every month where I'd be lying inert on the couch because my back hurt so much, and that continued into my forties. Physical exercise kept me active, but there seemed to be steady deterioration and more intense pain.

"My wife, the dear doctor, started me on prolotherapy, which in effect pulled the ligaments back together and made them more stable, and there was a significant reduction in pain. We moved on to radio frequency ablation—RFA—under fluoroscopy, to obliterate the pain pathway through a very specific area. I've found with RFA that I can typically go a year with complete relief, and with no need for surgery or spinal fusions or other treatment. There's been tremendous improvement, and I'm as active as I've ever been—with 100 percent less pain at 65 than I had at age 40." 

**For more information about resolution of pain issues, contact:**

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