

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Louisiana Pain Specialists Among First in US Curing Long COVID-19 Symptoms with Time-Tested Interventional Pain Technique

Protocol being developed at Louisiana Pain Specialists utilizing stellate ganglion blocks to cure patients of distorted taste and smell

NEW ORLEANS – July 8, 2022 – Louisiana Pain Specialists is proud to announce it is one of the first facilities in the United States developing a protocol utilizing a treatment known as stellate ganglion block to treat long COVID-19 symptoms.

To date, more than 85 million people in the United States have contracted COVID-19. Roughly 40% or more of patients that recover from COVID-19 may still exhibit some viral-like symptoms, collectively known as long COVID-19. Long COVID-19 is defined as having physical and/or neurological symptoms following an acute COVID-19 infection that persist at least one month after the initial infection. These symptoms may include brain fog, respiratory issues, sleep disturbances, anxiety, and depression. One of the most obvious signs of long COVID-19 appears to be loss or changes in smell and or taste.

The stellate ganglion block procedure has been used for more than a century for many conditions including neuropathic pain in the arms or face, complex regional pain syndrome, and more recently, for PTSD. However, recent case studies have shown that this procedure, which targets the main nerve bundle that controls the sympathetic nervous system, demonstrates promise as an effective treatment for long COVID-19 manifestations, including loss of taste and smell.

Dr. Suneil “Neil” Jolly, President and CEO of Louisiana Pain Specialists, and Vice Chair of Surgery and Medical Director of Pain Management at New Orleans East Hospital in New Orleans, Louisiana, has a goal to not only be at the forefront in treating patients suffering from long COVID-19, but keeping Louisiana at the forefront of healthcare innovation in general. “What Louisiana Pain Specialists is trying to do is create a safe, effective and well-tested protocol right here in our own state where we can treat those patients,” Jolly said. “In developing our evidence-based protocol, we want to be sure that Louisiana can provide cutting-edge treatment options for long COVID-19 patients. We plan for New Orleans to specifically spearhead this treatment and be a leader in emerging treatment options for COVID-19 and COVID-related illnesses.”

Dr. Jolly and his team of 6 physicians at Louisiana Pain Specialists are seeing positive results in their patients, and they are optimistic about what this means for others who have suffered for months or years from long COVID-19 symptoms with virtually no relief. Recently, a 54 y/o female patient presented to the practice after experiencing distorted taste and smell for almost 2 years since contracting COVID-19 in 2020. “I was down to bread and water. Eating was a miserable experience,” she says. After undergoing a stellate ganglion block, the patient reported same-day relief of her symptoms stating, “It gave me my life back. I could not believe it.” She has been symptom free for several months now.

Long COVID-19 symptoms may be attributed to a form of dysautonomia, which simply describes an autonomic nervous system that is in dysregulation. Acute illnesses like COVID-19 may cause this dysregulation. The stellate ganglion is a collection of nerves that run along both sides of the spine in the upper neck, and it plays a part in regulating the body's nervous system. By injecting a local anesthetic in the anterior region of the neck, targeting sympathetic chain activity, the stellate ganglion block essentially reboots the nervous system, which emerging evidence shows may lead to a reduction of long COVID-19 symptoms.

“When done right in an expert’s hands, it is an extremely safe injection with a pediatric-sized needle near the neck, and only takes a few minutes,” explains Jolly. “The nervous system and the immune system interact with tremendous complexity. This procedure specifically targets a group of nerves to, in a sense, hit the reset button on the sympathetic nervous system.”

Through offering the stellate ganglion block and by the development of a safe, proven treatment protocol for long COVID-19 patients, Louisiana Pain Specialists hopes to help change the face of how these patients are medically treated in the United States. According to Jolly, “Our goal is to offer this treatment to as many patients as possible by keeping it affordable and extremely safe. We want to provide hope for the hundreds of thousands of people that are suffering from long COVID-19.”

Louisiana Pain Specialists has successfully treated all types of pain by using innovative techniques and recent advances in pain management, regenerative medicine, interspinous spacers, and minimally invasive fusion therapies at seven locations throughout the greater New Orleans and Baton Rouge areas.

For more information about Louisiana Pain Specialists or to make an appointment, visit louisianapain.com.

About Louisiana Pain Specialists

Louisiana Pain Specialists is an interventional pain management practice with seven locations in Louisiana and is dedicated to improving patient quality of life. Using a balanced approach of medications, conservative treatments, and safe and clinically proven interventional solutions, Louisiana Pain Specialists educates its patients and practices pain management with compassionate care.
