

## 2.1. DIAGNOSIS: GENERAL PRINCIPLES

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### QUESTION 1: What is the definition of surgical site infection (SSI) in spinal surgery?

**RECOMMENDATION:** We recommend utilizing the definition provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), National Healthcare Safety Network (NHSN) Patient Safety Component Manual, Chapter 9: Surgical Site Infection (SSI) Event.

**LEVEL OF EVIDENCE:** Consensus

**DELEGATE VOTE:** Agree: 100%, Disagree: 0%, Abstain: 0% (Unanimous, Strongest Consensus)

#### RATIONALE

The most persuasive argument for adopting the CDC's definition for an SSI lies in utilizing search protocols to map International Classification of Disease, 10th revision, Procedure Classification System (ICD-10-PCS) and Current Procedural Terminology (CPT) codes when querying databases.

The CDC definition is the accumulation of multiple years of planning/tracking and modifying this instrument via annual reviews and input from professionals worldwide. The description includes such categorical sub-elements as the definition of an operative procedure and the definition of an operating room. It includes criteria for the sub-classifications of a superficial incisional SSI, deep incisional SSI and organ/space SSI [1]. The CDC's definition delineates the exclusion of such events as cellulitis, stitch abscesses, as well as stab wound or pin site infections. It also defines such infections about primary or secondary wounds and the surveillance periods for SSI following operative procedures. Furthermore, numerous spine-related studies have utilized the same definition put forth by the CDC [2–5].

Adopting a thorough and uniform definition for SSI is imperative, as studies have shown that the rate of SSI following spine

surgery varies based on the definition used [6]. In addition, having a standardized definition will improve surveillance, provide consistency among studies and improve overall patient care.

#### REFERENCES

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### QUESTION 2: What defines delay in the diagnosis of a spine infection?

**RECOMMENDATION:** There is no clear or established definition of delayed diagnosis for spine infection.

**LEVEL OF EVIDENCE:** Limited

**DELEGATE VOTE:** Agree: 100%, Disagree: 0%, Abstain: 0% (Unanimous, Strongest Consensus)

#### RATIONALE

The diagnosis of spinal infections is often delayed from one to three months from the onset of symptoms [1,2]. Delay in diagnosis

is frequently secondary to nonspecific symptoms including back and neck pain. A couple of studies have used delayed diagnosis