

Charles Ray

Neurosurgeon Charles Ray (1927-2011) was the recipient of the Industrial R&D Gold Prize for his invention of the prosthetic disc nucleus in the year 2000 but the Burton Report believes that his development of the Ray titanium threaded fusion cage was his single greatest (and least appreciated) contribution to the care of spine patients to-date. Born in Americus Georgia on August 1, 1927 and blessed with a brilliant and inquiring mind he became fluent in speaking eight languages. He was a savant globe traveler who was el-versed in medicine, engineering, philosophy and just about everything else. In one of his many (over 350) publications he pointed out to his neurosurgical colleagues that although they obtained the majority of their income from performing spine surgery this subject typically occupied less than 5% of their educational endeavors. As a president of the North American Spine Society, the American College of Spine Surgeons and the Spine Arthroplasty Society he endeavored to point out that the human spine is normally flexible and that better surgical alternatives than rigid fusion existed for the patient. As the founder of CeDaR Surgical and Raymedica he was actually the first to invent, and to manufacture, a intervertebral threaded cage which could immediately mechanically stabilize a unstable spine following adequate surgical decompression. By being an advocate of "arthrodesis" and "arthroplasty" rather than rigid "fusion" with pedicle rods and screws he has been a largely unappreciated pioneer who began to force other clinical minds, locked into obsolete and unproductive thinking, to gaze at new horizons.

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