Reply to letter to the editor

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Published online: 15 May 2011
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To the Editor:

I read with interest the thoughtful letter written by Dr. Guildford commenting on my Perspective piece published in *Skeletal Radiology* entitled “Vertebroplasty: Where Do We Go From Here?”. Dr. Guildford takes issue with the fact that the piece is, in his opinion, biased, which I in no way deny nor feel apologetic about. According to the Oxford Dictionary, perspective can be defined as “a particular attitude towards a way of regarding something; a point of view; the choice of a context for opinions, belief and experiences”.

As such, the brief piece I authored reflects my point of view with regards to the ongoing vertebroplasty controversy. My point of view has been formulated by reading the literature as well as performing this procedure and has been further honed in discussions with other experts—some of whom share my view and some of whom disagree with it.

I certainly have no objection to Dr. Guildford’s assertion that a well-constructed trial that can accurately test whether vertebroplasty has a positive impact on clinical outcome of patients would be welcome. I agree that a trial must be able to demonstrate whether vertebroplasty has a positive impact on patient clinical outcome, and this, indeed, I am sure was the intent of the trials that were published almost two years

ago in the *New England Journal of Medicine*. As I and many others have pointed out, there are flaws in these trials and a new trial requires correction of these flaws if we are to either prove or disprove the value of vertebroplasty. We all approach our scientific inquiries with biases and to pretend otherwise is wishful thinking. Hopefully in spite of this we all have the intellectual honesty to accept results that may go against what we may have initially expected.

I have also been criticized for not adequately supporting some of the statements made in my piece. It should be pointed out, however, that there are restrictions to the number of citations that can be made in a Perspective article, and the point of a piece such as this is not to provide an extensive, exhaustive review of the literature. Dr. Guildford will also be relieved to find out that I hold no vested interest in any company manufacturing or marketing vertebral augmentation equipment of any kind, although I have in the past participated in the Speakers Bureau for Cook Group Incorporated. I share Dr. Guildford’s hope that a future trial overcoming the problems of the previous published investigations will appear, specifically and clearly clarifying the true value of vertebroplasty in the treatment of osteoporotic fracture.

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