

HalfDay September 25, 2002 – Dr. N. Hadler
SCENARIO

Thomas J. is a 55-year-old computer programmer and data analyst at an IT firm. The firm had enjoyed legendary success through the 1990s; now it was forced to contract. Mr. J.'s Division had been relatively spared so far. Ever since college, Mr. J. has coped with intermittent episodes of low back pain, lasting a week or two every couple of years. He can recall several that were more prolonged, and several that even kept him off the golf course. Episodes are more frequent of late, and far more persistent. Furthermore, he is having difficulty at work. Prolonged sitting seems to exacerbate his pain and interfere with his concentration. He is on sick leave. The physician who services his company and consulting orthopedist tell him he has osteoarthritis and that surgery has little to offer. He has tried multiple anti-inflammatory pills without relief. He can't afford early retirement; he feels his savings and pension are too meager. He turns to you, his primary care physician, for advice.

His Past Medical History is remarkably non-contributory.

His Physical Examination is remarkable only for the pained look on his face and the caution he exhibits as he climbs on to the examining table.