Guidance for Fibromyalgia Patients who are having Elective Surgery

If you are having a major surgical procedure there are some issues that you may wish to discuss with your surgeon and anesthesiologist that could reduce the "fibro-flare" that often occurs after surgery in fibromyalgia patients.

1. Pain after surgery is inevitable because nearly all surgeries result in trauma to the skin and muscles. This post-surgical pain is usually accentuated in fibromyalgia patients due to their enhanced pain processing (see central sensitization).

2. Request that you wear a soft neck collar to reduce neck hyperextension (if an endotracheal tube is anticipated). This will help minimize inadvertent stretching of your neck muscles during positioning while you are unconscious.

3. Request that your arm with the intravenous line be kept near your body, not away from your body or over your head. This will help minimize inadvertent stretching of your arm and shoulder muscles during positioning while you are unconscious.

4. Sometimes “postoperative myalgia” is due to the use of a muscle relaxant drug called succinylcholine. If you have experienced this in previous surgery, I suggest you mention this to your anesthesiologist.

5. Request that you be given a pre-operative opioid pain medication – about 90 mins. prior to surgery. Opioids are morphine or morphine related drugs. The rationale for the pre-operative use of opioids is to minimize "central sensitization" - as this inevitably worsens the widespread body pain that you are already experiencing.

6. Ask to have a long-acting local anesthetic infiltrated into your incision - even though you will be asleep during the procedure. The rationale for this is to minimize pain impulses reaching the spinal cord and brain, which in turn drive central sensitization.

7. As a fibromyalgia patient you will need more, and usually longer duration, of post-operative pain medication. In most cases opioids should be regularly administered or self administered with a PCA pump (patient controlled analgesia).

8. Most fibromyalgia patients require a longer duration of post-operative convalescence, including physical therapy in many cases. Gentle stretching and reconditioning of muscles should start soon after the incision is well healed.