Important news

The editors of the *European Spine Journal* and Springer-Verlag are pleased to announce a new service for both the authors and the readership: Online First, the immediate online publication of accepted papers as soon as the authors have returned the corrected proofs. In the past, the full electronic versions of the *European Spine Journal* used to appear at the same time as the printed journal. From now on, however, the electronic version of all articles will be available to subscribers via the Internet weeks before the printed version is out.

As each paper is finalised for publication, it will be published on the Web with its own publication date as follows: "Published online: <date when published on Springer's LINK server>". Each article will be given an international identification code, the Digital Object Identifier

(DOI), which is registered with the International DOI Foundation, and is unique, much like the ISBN for books or the ISSN for periodicals. The DOI remains unchanged and can be used, for example, to create hyperlinks between Online First articles. Furthermore, the DOI is linked to the URL (Uniform Resource Locator).

Articles published Online First are fully citable by journal title and DOI. The printed version will carry the DOI and the online publication date.

Online First articles appear in their final form. Therefore, papers cannot be changed or withdrawn after electronic publication, corrections having to appear as an erratum, hyperlinked to the article.

Each article will be announced via LINK Alert, which is a free alerting service (<http://link.springer.de/>

alert). A table of contents showing all papers that have been accepted for publication in the *European Spine Journal*, but have not yet been printed, can be found via the Springer Web page: <http://link.springer.de/link/service/journals/00586/index.htm>, by clicking Online First.

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