Table 1

Common causes of low back pain[3]

Mechanical (80-90%)
- Unknown cause - usually attributed to muscle strain or ligamentous injury (65-70%)
- Degenerative disc or joint disease
- Vertebral fracture
- Congenital deformity (such as scoliosis, kyphosis, transitional vertebrae)
- Spondylolysis
- Instability

Neurogenic (5-15%)
- Herniated disc
- Spinal stenosis
- Osteophytic nerve root composition
- Annular fissure with chemical irritation of nerve root
- Failed back surgery syndrome (such as arachnoiditis, epidural adhesions, recurrent herniation); may cause mechanical back pain as well
- Infection (such as herpes zoster)

Non-mechanical spinal conditions (1-2%)
- Neoplastic (such as primary or metastatic) disease
- Infection (such as osteomyelitis, discitis, abscess)
- Inflammatory arthritis (such as rheumatoid arthritis and spondyloarthropathies, including ankylosing spondylitis, reactive arthritis, enteropathic arthritis)
- Paget's disease
- Other (such as Scheuermann's disease, Baastrup's disease)

Referred visceral pain (1-2%)
- Gastrointestinal disease (such as inflammatory bowel disease, pancreatitis, diverticulitis)
- Renal disease (such as nephrolithiasis, pyelonephritis)
- Abdominal aortic aneurysm

Other (2-4%)
- Fibromyalgia
- Somatoform disorder (such as somatisation disorder, pain disorder)
- Malingering