Realigning the spine

These dramatic procedures are challenging but safe, according to Lawrence G. Lenke, MD, who has performed more than 70 posterior vertebral column resections. The 10-hour operation proceeds in stages.

1. First, the misshapen spine is exposed.

2. Screws and rods are implanted to strengthen the patient’s spine, which is now “disconnected.” One or more vertebrae are removed to facilitate the realignment.

3. Gradually the spine is reformed into the most healthful posture possible. A cage is placed in front of the spinal cord as a replacement for the excised vertebra to support the spinal column.