

Medical inspiration from an old book

VIDEO	AUDIO
Jason	Sometimes extraordinary ideas are inspired by the most ordinary things.
Dr. Brinjikji	"And that's kind of when the lightbulb went off."
Jason	It started with a problem: ...
Dr. Brinjikji	"... a cerebrospinal fluid venous fistula, or what we call a CSF venous fistula."
Jason	An abnormal connection between the fluid that surrounds the spinal cord and a blood vessel that runs along the spine.
Waleed Brinjikji, M.D. Interventional Neuroradiology Mayo Clinic	"The fluid around the spinal cord is leaking too fast into a little vein causing the patients to lose that fluid and then get symptoms like headaches, brain fog, whooshing in the ears and just general malaise."
Jason	Treatments either had been ineffective, or required back surgery and a prolonged recovery time.
Jason	Dr. Waleed Brinjikji, an interventional neuroradiologist at Mayo Clinic, knew there had to be a better way.
Jason	And rather than searching for the answer using the latest in digital technology, he bought a 50-year-old medical textbook.
Dr. Brinjikji	"Published in the 1970s, looking at spinal veins."
Dr. Brinjikji	"I was paging through the book. I saw that there were these beautiful pictures of the azygos vein and beautiful pictures of other veins draining into it. And I said, 'Oh, these are the veins that are draining these CSF venous fistulas.'"
Dr. Brinjikji	"So I started thinking, what if we just blocked off the vein that it's draining into? And we do this for all sorts of other abnormal fistulas."
Jason	Using X-ray guidance, a catheter is navigated up the vein and medical glue is placed on the fistula,

	essentially plugging the spinal fluid leak.
Jason	The results of this minimally invasive procedure that Dr. Brinjikji has pioneered have been positive for most of his patients.
Dr. Brinjikji	"The day after, they feel 100% better, and their headaches have gone away. And they've never had a day like this in years."
Jason	After performing this new procedure on more than 50 patients at Mayo, Dr. Brinjikji is confident that this is the future of CSF venous fistula treatment.
Dr. Brinjikji	"I would say it's the present. And I think it is the future."
Jason	A future that all started by looking into the past.
Dr. Brinjikji	"Just finding this old book, you know, and just page through it, and it can just change your life."
Jason	For the Mayo Clinic News Network, I'm Jason Howland.