

Spinal Epidural, Retropharyngeal and Elbow Abscess in a Drug Addict Patient: A Case Report

Akif Yarkaç*, Çağrı Safa Buyurgan, Halil Oktay Usluer, Buğrahan Güldür, Ataman Köse

Mersin University Medical Faculty, Emergency Medicine Department, Mersin, Turkey

Abstract

Background: Intravenous drug use is a risk factor for central nervous system and spinal cord infections. The risk of spinal cord infection increases in cases where the immune system is suppressed. Neck pain, neck stiffness, high fever, and neurological deficits are common clinical symptoms and findings in cervical spinal epidural abscesses.

Case Report: A heroin-addicted male patient presented to the emergency department with complaints of weakness in the legs and stiffness in the neck, which started after heroin injection in the inguinal region. On physical examination, there was stiffness in the neck, and neck extension was limited. He noticed numbness in his arms and legs when he tried to extend his

neck. He had a fever of 38.3 °C. Neck soft tissue tomography revealed an abscess in the C5–6 prevertebral area and retropharyngeal area. **Magnetic** resonance imaging showed a hyperintense appearance in the spinal cord at the C4-6 level and a spinal epidural abscess. The patient underwent discectomy and abscess drainage for a spinal epidural abscess at the Department of Neurosurgery. Methicillin-sensitive *Staphylococcus Aureus* was grown in the abscess culture. During hospitalization, while antibiotic treatment had just been started, an abscess was observed in the elbow joint, and the abscess was drained by local surgery.

Conclusion: Spinal cord infections can occur in patients who use intravenous drugs. Cases of

simultaneous infections in different parts of the spinal cord have been reported. However, simultaneous spinal cord infection with retropharyngeal abscess and elbow joint abscess made our case interesting. It is thought that immunosuppression and the haematogenous spread of the microorganism caused this condition.

Keywords: Heroin, Drug Addiciton, Spinal Abscess