

THORACIC BUTTERFLY VERTEBRA: A CASE REPORT

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Introduction: Non-traumatic prolonged thoracic back pain occurs less frequently among adolescents. This could be due to a congenital spinal pathology, however at this level it is a rare cause of pain. Butterfly vertebra, which consists of a sagittal cleft in the vertebral body, is a congenital malformation that gives vertebrae the particular appearance of butterfly wings on anterior-posterior view of imaging studies.

Discussion: A 19-year old female, complaining of low back pain, particularly during prolonged standing or sitting position at a period of time. Onset of symptoms occurred 6 months before presentation, with localized, non- radiating pain and symptom is relieved after laying down and occasional over-the-counter analgesics. She had no known medical illness, denies any constitutional symptoms and no remarkable antenatal or postnatal history. She denied any history of fall or trauma and no other probable cause of symptoms could be identified. Her BMI of 32 (Height 1.55m and weight 77kg) falls under Class I Obesity. Physical examination revealed mild tenderness over lower thoracic region with left Para Spinal muscle spasm with no spinal deformity. Thorough neurological examination was done and no neurological deficit was detected. Blood investigations showed no evidence of infection. Anteroposterior (AP) thoracolumbar X-ray revealed a butterfly-like image at the T12 vertebra. The image at T12 vertebra was initially thought to be a compression fracture. The team proceeded with a whole spine x-ray and reporting came back as congenital anomaly which is the Butterfly Vertebra. Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) was not done for this patient. The patient was recommended regular analgesics, Vitamin B12 and physiotherapy with good outcome at follow-up.

Conclusion: In conclusion, although butterfly vertebra is considered usually asymptomatic in isolated cases, it may lead to symptoms of severe back pain due to the disc herniation, because there is absence of a normal disc between the two vertebrae.