

UTI Masking Diagnosis of Cauda Equina Syndrome in Pregnancy; Let's Get Back to Basic

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INTRODUCTION:

The cauda equina syndrome (CES) in pregnancy is rare. The lumbar disc herniation caused CES estimated 1 in 10000 pregnancies. Despite of small occurrence it can cause devastating complication like permanent urinary bowel incontinent and sexual dysfunction. Because big impact of the complication it carry risk of litigation to the medical personnel. Diagnosing CES in pregnancy is challenging due to overlapping pregnancy related discomfort. Urinary tract infection (UTI) are common during pregnancy and always mask the presentation of CES. Clinician should have high index of suspicion and get back to the principle to recognize CES .

REPORT:

34 years old Malay female a Gravida2Para1@ 35weeks complaint sudden onset of back pain and bilateral lower limb numbness and weakness .She had urinary and bowel incontinence and for past 2 days. She had been treated for UTI 1 week ago with antibiotic by local practisioner and having on and off numbness at buttock for uncertain date. Motor weakness upon dorsiflexion power 4 with reduced sensation over L4,L5,S1 and saddle paresthesia elicited. She had abnormal per-rectal findings. Urgent MRI showed huge central disc compression to the cauda equina . Patient underwent emergency caesarean section prior to urgent discectomy L4/L5. Post operatively patient bilateral lower limb numbness and saddle paresthesia improved and patient ambulating well.

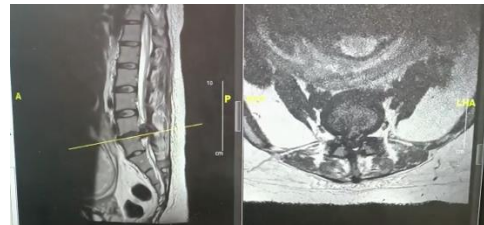


Figure 1: MRI

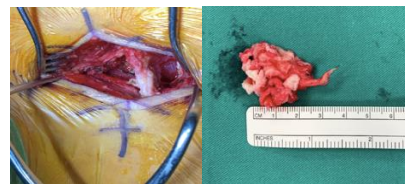


Figure 2: Intra op images

DISCUSSIONS:

Thorough history taking and physical examination is paramount important. Pregnant lady with symptoms of saddle anesthesia should be evaluate further for CES even overlap with UTI. Findings of motor sensory deficit and radicular pain give clinician clues serious pathology come from the spine . Abnormal findings on per-rectal examination will raise the suspicion of CES. Non contrasted Magnetic Resonance image (MRI) is a safe diagnostic tool to diagnose spine pathology for clinician to decide on further management. Early surgery lead to better outcome

REFERENCES:

1. Kim H., Kim S., Lee S., & Shin H.. Endoscopic discectomy for the cauda equina syndrome during third trimester of pregnancy. Journal of Korean Neurosurgical Society 2007;42(5):419. <https://doi.org/10.3340/jkns.2007.42.5.419>