

Double Trouble: Cervico-Lumbar Tandem Stenosis – Which One Should Be Tackled First?

¹Imran F.G, ¹Hezery H, ¹Fadzrul Abbas ¹Lim TS

¹Department of Orthopedic, Hospital Sultan Abdul Aziz Shah, UPM, Serdang Selangor.

INTRODUCTION:

Tandem spinal stenosis (TSS) occurs when the spinal canal narrows in two different areas. Our case is a patient with TSS subtype cervico-lumbar. Multiple question marks often arise in cases of TSS regarding which compression is to be dealt first or to be done simultaneously.

REPORT:

A 65 years old lady, presented with radiculopathy radiating to both left upper and lower limb. Patient's power was intact but however, sensation reduced over the left C5, C6 and C7 dermatome. Spurling's test was positive over the left upper limb. MRI showed degenerative changes with severe multilevel cervical and lumbar canal stenosis, worse at L4/L5 level with nerve root impingement. We opted to tackle the cervical stenosis as our primary concern. Anterior Cervical Discectomy and Fusion of C5/C6 and C6/C7 was done for the patient. Intraoperatively, osteophytes were seen over the anterior vertebral border of the C5, C6 and C7 along with degenerated intervertebral discs. Post operatively, her radicular pain and numbness improved. However, there is still numbness over her left foot.



Figure 1: MRI showing cervical and lumbar canal stenosis



Figure 2: Post operative cervical radiographs showing restored intervertebral space over the C5,C6 and C7

DISCUSSION:

We explore the options of staged or simultaneous surgery for this patient with TSS of cervico-lumbar spinal stenosis. It was wise to decompress the cervical region as it was her predominant symptom. Post-operatively, left upper limb symptoms resolved, lower limb symptoms were well controlled with medication and does not affect her activity of daily living.

CONCLUSION:

In cases of TSS, our centre proposes to decompress a lesion at a time and reassessing the residual symptoms. There will be instances where a second surgery may not be required. This will result in reducing the number of surgery intervention and its associated complications.

REFERENCES:

1. Staged surgery for tandem cervical and lumbar spinal stenosis: Which should be treated first? Chi et al. European Spine Journal (2018)