Symptomatic Tarlov cysts

A retrospective review

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Disclosures

- No disclosures
Introduction

- Tarlov cysts (TCs) are often asymptomatic lesions in the sacral spine.

- The diagnosis and treatment of symptomatic TCs remains controversial due to limited research.

- The primary aim of this study is to report the clinical findings of patients with symptomatic TCs and the success of non-surgical and surgical treatment.
Methods

- We retrospectively reviewed the charts of patients who were diagnosed with symptomatic TCs between 1/1/2007 and 1/1/2017. All patients were seen by a single surgeon at an academic medical center.

- Patient demographics, symptoms, prior treatment, and surgical data was collected and reviewed.

- Surgical treatment included laminectomy, microsurgical exposure and/or imbrication, and paraspinous muscle flap closure.
Results

- We identified 104 patients who presented with symptomatic TCs
  - Mean age=51
  - Number of females (n=87)
  - Mean age at initial symptoms= 48

- Most common symptoms
  - Low radicular pain (68%)
  - Back pain (52%)
  - Lower extremity weakness (41%)
  - Bowel/bladder dysfunction (30%)

- Bilateral symptoms were seen in 60 patients (57%).
Results

- **Non surgical treatment**
  - 57 patients attempted physical therapy with 16 (28%) patients reporting relief
  - 50 patients underwent an epidural injection with 19 (38%) patients reporting relief
  - 34 patients used oral steroids with 15 (44%) patients reporting relief
  - Of patients who attempted non-surgical treatment, 40 patients (55%) elected to undergo surgical treatment.

- Forty eight total patients underwent surgical resection and closure of the TCs.

- At 1 month post-surgery, 37 (77%) patients reported improvement in their symptoms.
Conclusion

- The treatment of patients presenting with symptomatic TCs has historically been difficult. Our data shows that non-surgical treatment of TC may only be effective in a small group of patients.

- Surgical intervention is an effective treatment in patients who do not have sustained relief after conservative management.

- Future studies will prospectively investigate the use of non-surgical treatment as a predictor for surgical success.