Short Communication

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Synovial Cysts of the Spine

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The best treatment for synovial cysts is generally non-surgical care, including over-the-counter pain medications, activity modification, and injections. The pain management specialists at Neurosurgery One offer these treatments. A synovial cyst is a relatively uncommon cause of spinal stenosis in the lumbar spine (lower back). It is a benign condition, and the symptoms and level of pain or discomfort may remain stable for many years. To remove the cyst and relieve pressure on the spinal cord or spinal nerves your doctor will perform a procedure called micro-decompression. This is often followed by fusion of the adjacent vertebrae to avoid recurrence of the cyst.

The most reliable treatment method for a synovial cyst is to remove the cyst and then fuse the joint. Fusing the joint stops all the motion at that level of the spine, and without any motion, the cyst should not regenerate. This is the most reliable treatment, but it is also an extensive surgery for the patient. Two types of injections are used to treat synovial cysts. A facet injection can drain the fluid from the cyst through the facet joint. A steroid is inserted after the fluid is removed to help reduce swelling and inflammation.

Rupture of percutaneous lumbar synovial cysts in patients with lumbar radiculopathy was associated with immediate relief of radicular symptoms. In 80% of the patients, synovial cyst rupture eliminated the need for surgical interventions over the measured term. Synovial cysts typically develop as a result of degenerative changes that occur with aging. They can be found throughout the spine, but are most common in the lumbar region (low back). The spine has many joints. Synovial cysts develop in the facet (fass-ET) joints of the spine.

Synovial cysts are fluid filled sacs that can develop on the spine. They most often affect the facet joints of the lumbar (lower) spine. These cysts are relatively uncommon and are not cancerous. Individuals may have a synovial cyst for years without experiencing any symptoms. The cause of spinal cysts is unknown, but they may result from degeneration and instability of the spine in areas subjected to repetitive motion, particularly the joints in the lumbar region. Patients with spinal cysts may have other degenerative conditions of the spine, such as arthritis and disk disease.

Many cysts heal on their own, which means that conservative treatments like rest and anti-inflammatory painkillers can often be enough to get rid of them. However, in some cases, routine drainage of the sac may be necessary to reduce symptoms. Sometimes, if you don't seek medical treatment, a ganglion cyst may rupture on its own. Ruptured ganglion cysts are particularly common in children and people who are active in sports as the cyst may rupture during a hard fall on the playground or field. The cause of spinal cysts is unknown, but they may result from degeneration and instability of the spine in areas subjected to repetitive motion, particularly the joints in the lumbar region.

Patients with spinal cysts may have other degenerative conditions of the spine, such as arthritis and disk disease. Mechanical stress can lead to degeneration of the facet joint. With increasing degeneration synovial fluid can build up in an attempt to protect the joint. Once enough fluid forms under pressure then a contained synovial cyst can form. This pain happens because tumors create a great deal of inflammation, and your adrenal gland does not make steroids when you sleep. Spine tumors that are close to major nerves can disrupt their ability to transmit messages between the body and the brain.

