



Failure of conservative treatment for lumbar spinal stenosis in elderly patients

Arch Gerontol Geriatr. 2007 May-Jun;44(3):235-41. Epub 2006 Jul 25

Shabat S, Folman Y, Leitner Y, Fredman B, Gepstein R.
Spinal Care Unit, Sapir Medica Center, 48 Tchernichovsky St., Kfar-Saba 44281, Israel.
drshabat@hotmail.com

Spinal stenosis syndrome affects mainly patients at their 5th-6th decades of life. There is a strong debate in the literature whether patients with spinal stenosis should be operated or treated conservatively. Our aim was to evaluate patients with lumbar spinal stenosis who were treated conservatively. All patients over 65 years of age who were handled conservatively in the private clinic of the senior author due to spinal stenosis syndrome were evaluated. There were 21 males and 15 females aged between 65 and 88 years. Intermittent claudication was the dominant clinical presentation. The radiological examination showed a frequent narrowing at the level L4-L5. All patients had a severe stenosis of less than 10mm diameter of the spinal canal. All patients underwent a conservative therapy which included physical therapy with ultrasound waves, short waves, and flexion exercises. All patients were offered to undergo an epidural or nerve root injection. Twenty-four patients agreed also to have one of these procedures to relieve their symptoms. All patients were followed between 6 and 10 months after the initial diagnosis. We used the Oswestry index category for evaluation. In all parameters the conservative treatment failed to improve the symptoms in the vast majority of patients. None of the patients was very satisfied with the results of conservative treatment while 33 patients (92%) were not so satisfied or unsatisfied with the results. We conclude that conservative treatment for lumbar spinal stenosis is not a success for elderly patients. These patients should be convinced to undergo operative treatment.

PMID: 16872695 [PubMed - indexed for MEDLINE]