

Symptomatic Tarlov cysts

A retrospective review

**Brendan J McShane, BA; Patricia Sullivan, MD;
William C. Welch, MD**
Department of Neurosurgery
Pennsylvania Hospital

AANS, April 28 - May 2, 2018



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.**

