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The differential diagnosis of infraspinatus radiating pain and C5 - C6 radiculopathy in patient following post anterior cervical discectomy and fusion: A case report

Aws Obaid

Umm Alqura University, KSA

Objective: The main objective of the study is to determine the differences between infraspinatus radiating pain and C5 and C6 radiculopathy and to outline the similar signs and symptoms of infraspinatus radiating pain and C5 radiculopathy.

Case Description: A 38 year-old male patient presented with chief complaint of neck pain, numbness and pain radiating to the left arm that started two years ago. Furthermore signs and symptoms included weakness in shoulder muscles and hand grip, affected activity of daily living, as well as the pain had progressed. Pain constant was 6/10 according to visual analog scale. Subsequently, he went to an orthopedic surgeon for an examination. MRI findings were C5–C6 diffuse disc bulge and bilateral foraminal stenosis more in the left side. The physician thus recommended surgery for him: it was anterior cervical discectomy and fusion. Post-surgery, the patient felt improvement but after five months, symptoms re-occurred; the pain progressed and became continuous, subsequently, he returned to his doctor, who then referred him to the physical therapy department. He came to the physical therapy clinic and a full assessment was conducted. Findings were nothing indicative to problem in the cervical and there was tightness in the infraspinatus muscle. Dealing with him as a muscular dysfunction case, we treated him with the following: Myofascial release techniques, stretching exercises and Kinesio taping. After this session, the patient felt improvement and the symptoms started to disappear.

Conclusion: In this case after the clinical examination there is no clinical evidence concerning nerve compression and the referral zone of the infraspinatus muscle is very similar to C5 and C6 dermatomes; this may lead to confusion in the diagnosis of patients like this.

Biography

Aws Obaid has completed his Bachelor degree of physical therapy at Umm Alqura University; he has also participated in many international conferences and workshops. He is also a member of prestigious societies like, Saudi Scientific Diabetes Society, Saudi Physical Therapy Association SPTA, Saudi Spine Association, and Virtual Medical Academy Team.

aws_15_@hotmail.com

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