

Causalgia

The term **causalgia** (Greek: kausis – **burning**, algos – **pain**) was introduced by **Silas Weir Mitchell** in **1864**. It was used to describe a rare **syndrome** that followed a minority of partial **peripheral nerve injury** in the American civil war. Triad: **burning pain**, **autonomic dysfunction** and trophic changes.

For **causalgia**, see **Complex regional pain syndrome** (CRPS):

CRPS Type II (AKA major causalgia) follows **nerve injury** (originally described after high velocity missile injuries). CRPS Type I (AKA **reflex sympathetic dystrophy** or causalgia minor) denoted less severe forms, and has been described after non-penetrating trauma ¹⁾.

Shoulder-hand syndrome and Sudeck's atrophy are other variant designations. In **1916**, the **autonomic nervous system** was implicated by René Leriche, and the term **reflex sympathetic dystrophy** (RSD) later came into use ²⁾ (but RSD may be distinct from causalgia) ³⁾.

¹⁾
Sternschein MJ, Myers SJ, Frewin DB, et al. Causalgia. Arch Phys Med Rehabil. 1975; 56:58–63

²⁾
Schott GD. An Unsympathetic View of Pain. Lancet. 1995; 345:634–636

³⁾
Ochoa JL, Verdugo RJ. Reflex Sympathetic Dystrophy: A Common Clinical Avenue for Somatoform Expression. Neurol Clin. 1995; 13:351–363

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