

Cervical synovial cyst

Synovial cyst in the **cervical spine** is a very rare pathology that develops from the **facet joint**. When a synovial cyst emerges into the surrounding space, it can compress the nervous tissue and cause neurological symptoms. In the cervical area there is additionally the risk of spinal cord compression comparing to the more common presentation of synovial cysts in the **lumbar spine**.

Epidemiology

A literature review identified 35 studies with 89 previously reported cases of surgically treated subaxial **cervical juxtafacet cysts** (JFCs) ¹⁾.

Types

Retroodontoid synovial cyst

Pathogenesis

Numerous theories have been established to explain the pathogenesis of synovial cyst. Biomechanical alterations of the spine play a significant role in the development of synovial cyst. However, the etiology is still unclear ²⁾.

Clinical Features

At given cervical spinal levels, synovial cysts probably share clinical features with disc herniation and stenosis.

Brown-Séquard syndrome

A rare case of a synovial cyst in the lower cervical spine presented as **Brown Séquard syndrome**

No previous report has been issued in the English literature on a synovial cyst presenting with Brown-Séquard syndrome. Neurologic function recovered completely after complete removal of the cyst and expansive laminoplasty ³⁾.

Treatment

Uschold et al. advocate for early decompression rather than prolonged conservative treatment, for pre- and postoperative dynamic imaging, and for fusion in selected cases as an initial surgical consideration ⁴⁾ ⁵⁾.

Case reports

A cervical synovial cysts from the left facet joint grew into the spinal canal and compressed the C8 nerve root which led to root compressing symptoms. Interestingly Breckwoldt et al. found this synovial cyst with congenital fusion and identified only nine similar cases in the literature. The cyst was removed surgically and the patient discharged without complications ⁶⁾.

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Uschold T, Panchmatia J, Fusco DJ, Ablä AA, Porter RW, Theodore N. Subaxial cervical juxtafacet cysts: single institution surgical experience and literature review. *Acta Neurochir (Wien)*. 2013 Feb;155(2):299-308. doi: 10.1007/s00701-012-1549-0. Epub 2012 Nov 17. Review. PubMed PMID: 23160630.

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Breckwoldt T, Oktenoglu T, Sasani M, Suzer T, Ozer AF. A rare cause of root-compression: Subaxial cervical synovial cyst in association with congenital fusion. *Int J Surg Case Rep*. 2015 Sep 18;16:90-92. doi: 10.1016/j.ijscr.2015.09.015. [Epub ahead of print] PubMed PMID: 26433927.

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Kim SW, Ju CI, Kim HS, Kim YS. Brown-séquard syndrome caused by a cervical synovial cyst. *J Korean Neurosurg Soc*. 2014 Apr;55(4):215-7. doi: 10.3340/jkns.2014.55.4.215. Epub 2014 Apr 30. PubMed PMID: 25024827; PubMed Central PMCID: PMC4094748.

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