Transforaminal Epidural Block or Selective Nerve Root Block?

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Radicular pain is a symptom and is with the formation of ectopic impulse and is not equivalent with radiculopathy that is accompanied with neurologic signs (sensory and motor changes). Radicular pain in worsening contextual factor transforms to radiculopathy.

Spinal nerve root contrary to peripheral nerve has no specific intraneural blood-nerve barrier and so it is more prone to symptomatic compression injury and the formation of endoneural edema. Following to nerve root pressure, vascular porosity increases and endoneural edema forms. With endoneural fluid pressure, capillary blood circulation decreases and can creates intraneural fibrosis, which has a vital role in creating radiculopathy because 58% of spinal nerve roots nutrition is from cerebral spinal fluid (CSF). Fibrosis around nerves interferes with nutrition from CSF and causes nerve roots hyperesthetic and hypersensitive to compressive forces. Capillary stasis with congestion is also effective. That with the creation of pathologic biochemical changes contributes to radicular pain. When experimentally induced ischemia is formed, pressure for radicular arterioles occlusion is high. Even though, nutrition from CSF in low pressure of radicular arteries during fibrosis and epidural inflammation is scarce. Rapid onset of neural and vascular compromise more than gradual mechanical pressure causes symptomatic radiculopathy. Nowadays, the main function of the inflammatory nucleus pulposus in the creation of epidural inflammation and spinal pain is distinct [1-3]. Injection in surrounding nerve controls inflammation and can stabilize the sensitized neural reaction due to pain. The usual way in the specification level of radicular pain is selective nerve root block. The selective nerve root block is marked by the diffusion of injected material in the nerve root path, but not epidural space in contrast to transforaminal technique that is injected into anterior epidural space. Most of the time transforaminal epidural block and selective nerve root block used interchangeably, but sometimes considered to be separate [1-7]. Although main indication of SNRB is still radicular pain, there are many other indications for this block.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indications</th>
<th>Contraindications</th>
<th>Complications</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diagnostic</td>
<td>Patient refusal</td>
<td>- Pain after injection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Diagnosing inflammation of a nerve root with a history of radicular pain when neurophysiology studies is not beneficial</td>
<td>- Coagulopathy</td>
<td>- Anterior spinal artery syndrome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Diagnosing the cause of pain when a lot of factors come out</td>
<td>- Allergy to injective material</td>
<td>- Embolism lead to paraplegia or quadriplegia or nystagmus, confusion and coma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Diagnosing of painful disc when several discs are involved</td>
<td>- Infection of injection site</td>
<td>- Directed injury of the spinal cord</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Diagnosing the cause of pain in hip and spine</td>
<td>- High pressure of inner cranium</td>
<td>- Dissection of the vertebral artery and breakup of blood brain barrier causes ischemia and brain death followed by high pressure in the cranium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Distinguishing the engaged root in spondyloolisthesis</td>
<td>- Not corrected severe hypovolemia</td>
<td>- Neurological complains caused by directing nerve damage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Identifying the sufferer level in the narrowness of multiple levels</td>
<td>- Pregnancy</td>
<td>- Transient blindness followed by temporarily intra-epidural pressure increase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Recognizing the sufferer level in fibrosis after operation</td>
<td>- Motor deficit</td>
<td>- Pneumothorax *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Perineal pain**</td>
<td>- Cauda equine syndrome</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Anatomical evaluation of this small space has attracted scientific interest because of the complications from the injections, which sometimes can be fatal (e.g. intervertebral space adjacent the vascular network especially the Adamkiewicz). If the conventional technique named based on the putting needle in the epidural space, especially the anterior epidural space which is near this vascular network, known as transforaminal injection, putting the needle on the nerve root can be called selective nerve root injection. Transforaminal injection due to multiple complications cautiously used today and SNRB is done instead [1-3,8].

**Table 1: Indications, contraindications and complications of TFEP & SNRB.**

**specific for sacral region.

*specific for thoracic region.

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It seems that putting needles in different parts of the space have the same clinical effects but with different complications. To learn more about the intervertebral foramen considers it schematically into several divided spaces. Intervertebral foramen divided into three sections schematically from anterior to posterior by using cadaveric specimens and different types of radiographic contrast material distributions studied. On the basis of anatomic sections, from anterior to posterior; type 1 injection was intraepineural; type 2, extrapineural; and type 3, paraneural and both the early and late responses had no significant differences [9].

Despite the split of the intervertebral foramen from anterior to posterior there is another division that refers to 3 sections of the intervertebral foramen from top to the bottom; middle, superior and inferior. Regularly transforaminal entry was carried out by entering the foramen at the superior aspect. New studies express according to the Adamkiewicz artery location opposed to normal ways of lumbar injection and thoracic that needle located in the posterior and superior foramen, it would be better if the needle located in inferior and posterior foramen [10].

Manchikanti has gone even further and consider all complaints of transforaminal injection due to the safe or superior triangle and recommended to put the needle away and around the nerve root by an infraneural approach [11].

Conclusion

Regarding to sever complications reported due to transforaminal epidural injection, it is suitable to consider an alternative for it. By comparing safety and efficacy of SNRB and less reported complications of it with the inferior posterior approach, it seems SNRB could be the alternative for transforaminal method.

Bibliography