A PHYSICAL THERAPY APPROACH TO LUMBAR SPINAL STENOSIS AND CHRONIC LOW BACK PAIN: A CASE REPORT
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Abstract (Limited to 300 Words):

Introduction: Lumbar spinal stenosis and degenerative intervertebral disc disease are common causes of chronic low back pain. Interlaminar epidural steroid injections and physical therapy are common non-surgical interventions used to treat this type of pain.

Purpose: The purpose of this case report is to describe the clinical reasoning and application of evidence to the examination, evaluation, treatment and outcomes of a patient with lumbar spinal stenosis and chronic low back pain.

Case Description: The patient was a 61-year-old male with MRI confirmed degenerative spinal changes and stenosis with subsequent chronic low back pain. He had a 10-15 year history of back pain and a 6-month history of left posterior leg and foot pain. He expressed functional limitations in walking, sitting, and sleeping and he perceived his disability as being extreme (28/50 Oswestry). Four days prior to initiating physical therapy, he underwent an interlaminar epidural steroid injection to L5-S1. Intervention: The patient was seen for seven visits including the initial evaluation, spanning over three weeks. The focus of treatment was lower extremity stretching, lumbar stabilization, patient education and ultrasound.

Outcomes: Improvement was measured based on the patient’s self-reported perceived disability using the Oswestry Low Back Pain Scale, pain intensity using an 11-point visual analog scale, and changes in physical impairment.

Discussion: This patient improved in all outcome areas. It is difficult to determine if progress was due to the epidural injection or physical therapy intervention. It is theorized that the combination of the two, accounts for his significant improvement. His lower extremity pain may have been due to a secondary piriformis syndrome, but that is also difficult to confirm. A potential area in need of research was identified: the effect of physical therapy intervention in combination with lumbar epidural injections for patients with spinal stenosis and chronic low back pain.