

# Case report

## Intramedullary Spinal Cord Lipoma : A rare Cause of Paraparesis In A Child

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### ABSTRACT

Spinal cord lipomas constitute a very small percentage of all CNS tumors. The incidence of nondysraphicintramedullary lipoma of spinal cord is below 1% of all spinal cord tumors. Due to their mass effect, they can significantly cause progressive neurological deficits. We present a case of one and half year old girl with paraparesis. MRI whole spine was done which suggested C5-T1 intramedullary spinal cord lipoma. Laminectomy of C5, C6 and L1 with laminoplastic laminotomy from C7 to T12 for subtotal resection of lipoma was done. Dysraphism was not seen and postoperative neurological findings were same as pre operative.

*Keywords: [intramedullary, lipoma, spine ]*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The incidence of spinal cord tumors, which are extremely rare tumors of the central nervous system, rises with advancing age.[1]Primary Spinal Cord tumors originate from the spinal cord or its surrounding tissues while Secondary Spinal Cord tumors originate from different parts of the body which metastasizes through blood or lymph. Depending upon the location with duramater, they can be extradural or intradural. Intradural may be extramedullary which is more common or intramedullary which is less common[2]

Spinal cord lipomas are made up of adipocytes and are benign in nature. They can be classified into 3 main groups:- lipomas of the conus medullaris, lipomas of the terminal filum, and subpial lipomas. Subpial lipomas are entirely intramedullary lesions and they are very rare[3]Intradural intramedullary spinal cord lipomas remain most commonly associated with dysraphism [2,4] and the incidence of nondysraphic intramedullary spinal cord lipomas is less than 1% of all spinal cord tumors[5] The posterior part of the cervical or thoracic spine are the most common locations of intradural lipomas[4]

### 2. PRESENTATION OF CASE

A one and half year old girl presented with inability of sit or stand without support since birth. On neurological examination, paraparesis was present, knee jerk reflex was exaggerated and ankle clonus was found positive on both sides. There was no signs of skin stigmata like hair, dimple or mass. MRI spine revealed intramedullary lipoma expanding from C5 to L1 vertebrae. (Fig. 1 & 2) Posterior midline incision and subperiosteal dissection was done to retract and detach paraspinous muscles. Laminectomy of C5, C6 and L1 with laminoplastic laminotomy from C7 to T12 was done. Ligamentum flavum was resected and dura was open for accessing the intradural intramedullary lipoma.(Fig. 3)

There was no spinal dysraphism. The intramedullary lipoma was compressing both sides of the nerve roots. Subtotal removal of the lipoma was done as it was intermingled with the spinal cord. (Fig. 4) Excised tissue was sent to Pathology lab for biopsy and it was consistent with fibro-lipoma. Immediate post operative neurological status of the patient was same as preoperative status and the postoperative course was uneventful.

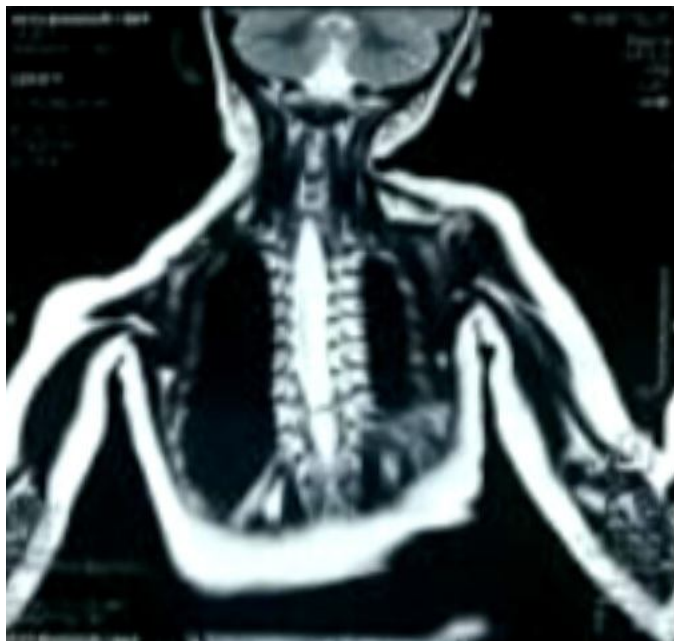


Figure 1. MRI whole spine, coronal section shows a large well defined fat contained predominantly extramedullary intradural lesion extending from C5 to L1 vertebral level s/o lipoma.

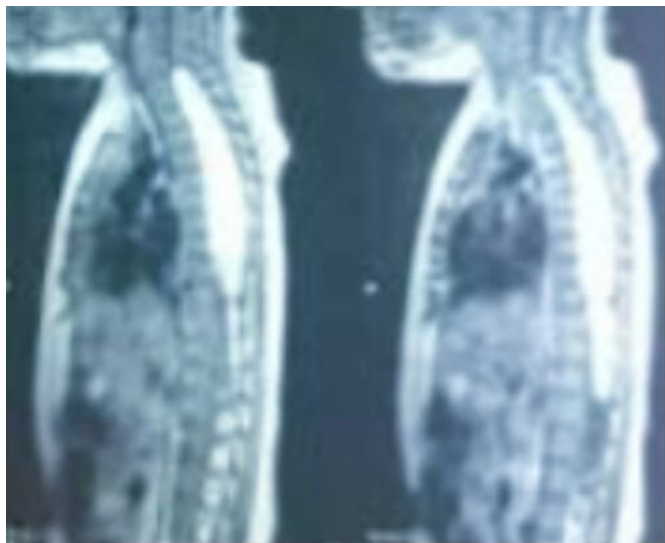


Figure 2: MRI whole spine, sagittal view shows a large well defined fat contained predominantly extramedullary intradural lesion extending from C5 to L1 vertebral level s/o lipoma



Figure 3 :Posterior midline incision and subperiosteal dissection done to retract and detach paraspinous muscles. Laminectomy of C5, C6 and L1 with laminoplastic laminotomy from C7 to T12 was done. Ligamentum flavum was resected and dura was open for accessing the intradural intramedullary lipoma.

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Figure 4 :The intramedullary lipoma was compressing both sides of the nerve roots. Subtotal removal of the lipoma was done as the mass was intermingled with the spinal cord.

### 3. DISCUSSION

A number of hypotheses have been put forward as the cause of intramedullary lipomas but none of them completely clarify the exact origins of the spinal lipoma. However, "Developmental Error Theory" is the most commonly accepted hypotheses which states that the growth of lipoma in the spinal cord is due to inclusion of misplaced adipocytes during the formation of the neural tube. [6,7,8]. Spinal lipoma is a hamartoma or a malformation and not a true neoplasm.[8] This theory too explains the dorsal location of lipoma and may also describe the existence of the nondysraphic spinal lipoma[6,7,8]

Early clinical presentation of spinal cord lipoma includes a slow ascending spastic monoparesis or paraparesis [9,10] The characteristic clinical presentation of intramedullary spinal cord lipomas is that the evolution of initial symptom is gradual but late deterioration is sudden [7,9,10] When there is physiological reserve for accommodation of the slow enlargement of lipoma, there is or no functional change, but when there is no more physiological reserve, neurological features progresses rapidly [7] Nondysraphic spinal cord lipomas have only small space for enlargement and therefore they have early appearance of symptoms [10]

Spinal Cord lipomas are a mixture of fatty tissues and connective tissues intervened by neural tissues so they are more a congenital lesion rather than a neoplasm [6,7,10] They can be managed conservatively if there is no symptoms. [6] However, surgical debulking should be done in symptomatic patients but aggressive debulking is not recommended. Decompression alone is sufficient even in symptomatic patients. Additionally, the impinging nature of the lipoma hampers gross total removal.[6,9] Early surgical treatment also avoids irreversible spinal cord dysfunction, therefore, early surgical intervention before symptoms progression is justifiable [7]

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

Since, intramedullary lipoma is benign and more commonly seen in children, laminoplastic laminotomy for decompression of the lesion is crucial for spinal stability and better cosmetic result.

#### **CONSENT (WHEREEVER APPLICABLE)**

All authors declare that 'written informed consent was obtained from the patient (or other approved parties) for publication of this case report and accompanying images. A copy of the written consent is available for review by the Editorial office/Chief Editor/Editorial Board members of this journal.

#### **ETHICAL APPROVAL (WHEREEVER APPLICABLE)**

All authors hereby declare that all experiments have been examined and approved by the appropriate ethics committee and have therefore been performed in accordance with the ethical standards laid down in the 1964 Declaration of Helsinki.

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