

Cervical Discogram

Overview

Cervical discography, cervical discogram, or provocative discography are interchangeable terminologies that are used to describe a procedure which is a diagnostic tool used to establish the structural integrity of a cervical disc (or discs) and to determine if a particular disc is responsible for a patient's cervical spine pain. The pain can be described as axial in nature (along the spine) or radicular in nature (along the extremity).

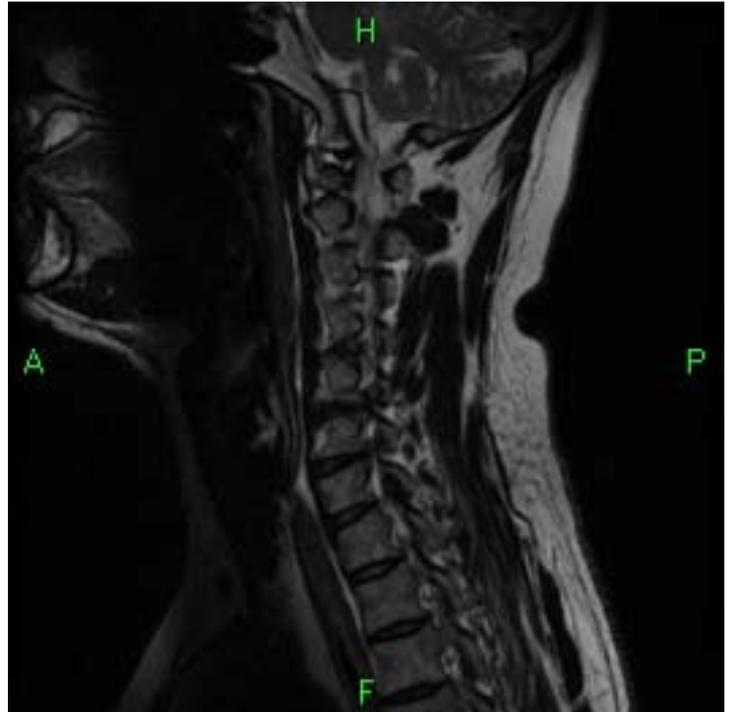
MRI and CT scans of the cervical spine show anatomical changes and when multiple discs are shown to be abnormal on imaging studies, cervical discogram can be helpful in isolating the problem disc. Spine surgeons use discography before surgery to map out a surgical treatment modality when the painful condition persists despite conservative treatment.

Procedure

The test is performed on an outpatient basis in a hospital or medical facility. A local anesthetic is used to numb the target area. Fluoroscopy (X-ray) is used to guide the needle into the suspected cervical disc. A radiopaque dye is then injected through the needle into the nucleus (center) of the disc. The doctor then looks for the following:

1. Concordance of pain reproduction.
2. Fluoroscopic images of the disc that may show a disc tear, disc herniation, loss of disc height, etc.
3. Injecting the painful disc with local anesthetic to see if the pain diminishes.
4. Sending the patient for post-discography CT scan to evaluate the disc anatomy.

Discography technique helps localize the exact location of discogenic pain and provide a detailed anatomical picture of the disc. This allows the development of a more comprehensive treatment plan and may change the outcome of the patient's painful condition.



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