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Foreword

Cervical, thoracic, and lumbosacral radiculopathies: update in diagnosis and management



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Consulting Editor

Readers of this issue of *Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Clinics of North America* owe a debt of gratitude to Dr Dillingham for overseeing this project: organizing this important topic, selecting authoritative writers and bringing it all together. We have not had an issue on radiculopathies—only articles in previous issues—and I felt it was time to discuss this topic in depth. Tim Dillingham, with his interest in the scientific study of the electromyography of radiculopathies, was the logical choice to be Guest Editor.

This is one of the few monographs that discusses radiculopathies of the thoracic region. It also recognizes the differences between root disease in the cervical, lumbar, and thoracic spine. Cervical radiculopathy is not lumbar radiculopathy, and it is not managed in the same way. The issue is organized with most emphasis on the nonsurgical management of these disorders, but also discusses diagnostic testing and surgical treatment.

These conditions are not easy to manage. Often, other structures are also involved. For example, with degenerative changes in the cervical spine, foraminal encroachment may occur, causing radiculopathy. To restrict motion and consequent pain, muscles may over-contract. Chronic neck pain may then have components of degenerative arthritis, radiculopathy, and muscular pain, causing the “cervical spondylosis triad.”

Finally, on a topic this complex, regional differences in management will be present. Not all physicians have been trained in the same techniques and

all tests are not all available in every part of the country. Lumbosacral spinal stenosis (LSSS) has been an area of my research interest for some time. One of the best techniques to distinguish the neuropathic pain of LSSS from the referred pain of degenerative spondylosis is a carefully performed dermatomal somatosomal evoked potential study. The reader interested in further information on this technique is referred to: “A Physiological Approach to the Evaluation of Lumbosacral Spinal Stenosis” in the May 1988 issue of *Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Clinics of North America* (pp 381–9).

There is a wealth of information here. I hope—along with Dr Dillingham—that you find this issue an informative and useful reference.

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