

EXTENSIVE INTERVERTEBRAL DISCS CALCIFICATION

(Case report)

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Intervertebral disc calcification (IDC) in the paediatric age group is an uncommon but a well recognised entity [1-7]. It affects predominantly school age children but does occur in adults and there are reports of neonates being affected [3]. The etiology of IDC is unknown although 15% of patients have history of previous upper respiratory tract infection and 30% of preceding trauma [6]. However as both of these events are common in children their etiological significance is uncertain. Complete regression of calcifications in almost all the cases is another characteristic, unusual feature of IDC [4]. IDC is divided into symptomatic and asymptomatic forms. In the symptomatic group the cervical spine is often involved and there is frequent radiographic evidence of disc protrusion [5]. The symptoms may appear suddenly as we have seen in a case diagnosed initially as renal colic. More often the pain is mild or quite vague.

We report a 8 year-old girl with mild symptomatic form of IDC who was found to have extensive disc calcifications at X-ray examination.

Case report

This patient arrived to Gottfr von Preyer'sches Kinderspital because of mild back pain for several weeks. Radiographs of the spine documented 14 calcified discs. The laboratory examinations including routine blood and urine examinations, serum electrolytes and immunologic studies all were normal. The physical examination was normal.

Follow up examination revealed regression of calcifications in the following years (Fig. 1A-D).

Discussion

The average number of calcified discs is 1.4 in symptomatic and 2.4 in asymptomatic patients. The greatest number of discs involved, reported is 12 [6]. In our patient calcifications extended from the C7/T1 intervertebral disc space down to the L1/L2 level-together 14 discs were calcified. There was no evidence of disc herniation. The symptoms were mild and control examinations over the next 4

years showed continuous regression of calcifications with only a single disc affected at the age of 13 years.

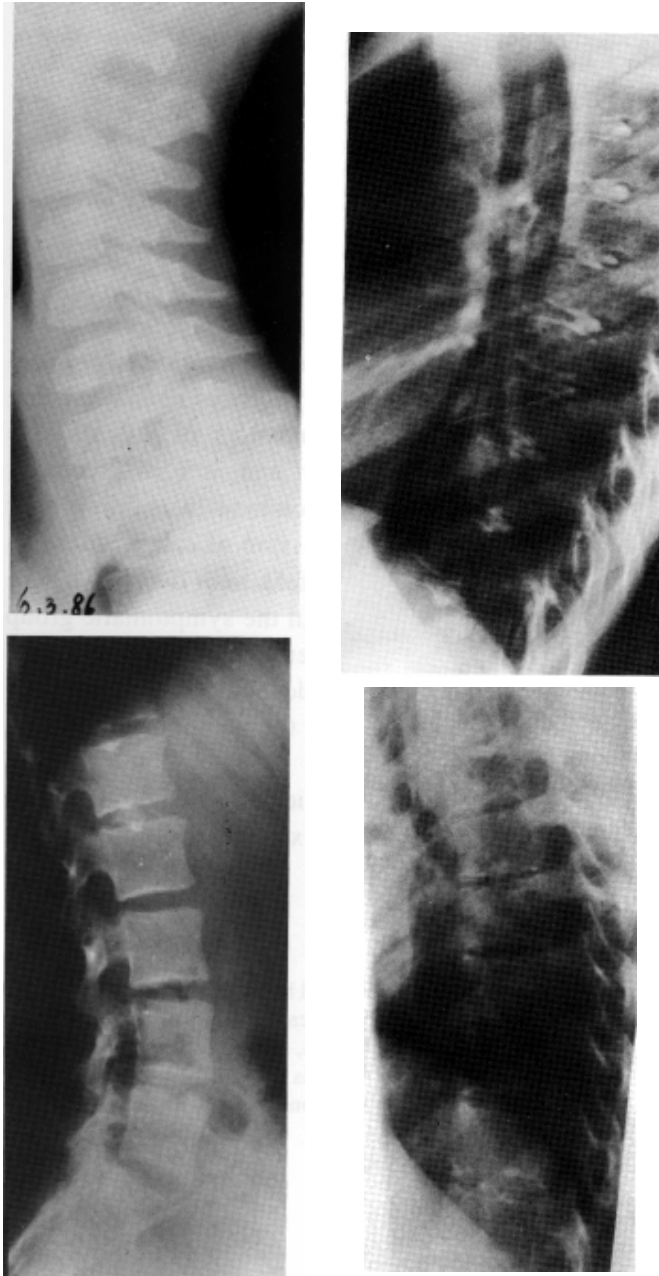


Fig. 1 a-d: a & b 8 years old. Only one disc C7/Th I is calcified in the cervical spine. All the thoracic intervertebral discs are calcified; c: 12 years old. Lumbar discs are still calcified; d: 13 years old. Almost complete regression of calcifications in the thoracic spine.

References

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