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The effectiveness of combined radiofrequency (RF) plus epidural therapy versus epidural block alone for spinal stenosis pain due to added hypertrophied lumbo-sacral facets syndrome

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Introduction: In lumbar spinal stenosis, spinal nerve roots in the lower back are compressed, producing tingling, weakness or numbness that radiates from the low back, buttocks and legs, while lumbosacral facet syndrome, a type of degenerative arthritis, occurs between the lower back and pelvis, causing significant pain throughout the lower body.

Aim: The aim of the study is to evaluate the effectiveness of combined radiofrequency (RF) plus epidural therapy versus epidural therapy alone for spinal pain due to added hypertrophied lumbosacral facets syndrome.

Patients & Methods: Study involved 60 patients of Pain & Headache Center, IMC, KSA. First group (N=32) underwent combined LS (RF) + epidural, applied to the lumbosacral facets region, with the following settings: 80 degrees x 1 min and repeated x 3 with repositioning of the needle. Second group (N=28) underwent epidural block only and dexamethasone. Patients were followed up to one year period. Inclusive criteria: 38 females, 22 males; ages between 40-70 years old, with mean of 38 years; and patients who already failed 9-12 sessions of ECSW or PT. Exclusive criteria: patients older than age 80; with uncontrolled diabetes and blood pressure; taking anti-coagulant; other neurological deficits; pregnant women.

Results: Average improvement of 75% for the first group, according to the numeric pain scale, was seen in patients who were treated by combined therapy; 60% in second group. Patients with low back pain who went through the combination therapy had more significant improvement than those who went through early epidural block only, with benefits lasting for more than 6 months.

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