Fluoroscopically guided transforaminal epidural catheterization of ankylosing spondylitis

Ankillozan spondilitli olguda floroskopi eşliğinde transforaminal epidural kateter

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Introduction

Ankylosing spondylitis (AS) is a chronic, progressive and autoimmune collagen tissue disease. The inflammation in the joints causes progressive degenerative osteoarthritis.[1] In this article, we discuss a case of AS that received a successful epidural catheterization and anesthesia in for total hip replacement surgery, which was made difficult due to intubation and an interlaminar neuroaxial anesthesia via transforaminal route under fluoroscopy guidance. To our knowledge, there is no such report in the literature.

Case Report

A fifty year old male patient, weighing 85 kg and 167 cm tall, presented to the orthopedics outpatient clinic. He was diagnosed with coxarthrosis of the left joint, and total hip replacement surgery was planned. The patient had a history of ankylosing spondylitis for 20 years. He developed congestive heart failure, restrictive type lung disease, and uveitis at the left eye during the previous year. In his physical examination, there was postural deformity, and his left hip joint had a 30-degree flexion posture with no active or passive motion possible. His muscle strength at his bilateral lower extremities was 4/5. In the head and neck examination, he had impaired vision in his left eye; mouth opening range was 2-cm; thyromental distance measured 4-cm, sternomental distance measured 6-cm; and there was limited motion in his extension (40 degrees) and flexion (10 degrees) of the neck. The Mallampati score was assessed as class III. Vertebral radiogram revealed squaring of vertebral bodies, and bamboo spine appearance and due to syndesmophytes (Figure 1). Written informed consent was obtained from the patient af-
ter that the patient was taken to the operating. Pre-
medication was not administered. Before anesthesia
administration, equipment was checked, including a
LMA fastrach, gum elastic bougie, a videolaryngos-
cy, a tracheostomy tray. We decided to the patient
of epidural catheterization via fluoroscopic guided
(Plan A). Accidental dural puncture could be recog-
nized with cerebrospinal fluid, we would place the
catheter into the subarachnoid space for continuous
spinal anesthesia (Plan B). We would performed the
general anesthesia if the administration of epidural
anesthesia could been respiratory insufficiency or
failed neuroaxial block (Plan C).

The patient was positioned prone, a betadine-based
solution is spread over the skin in circular fashion,
and sterile drapes applied. After under C-arm-flu-
roscopy guidance, an 18-gauge Tuohy needle was
advanced through the lumbar (L) 4-5 space with a
20 degree oblique angle until the intervertebral fora-
men. Confirming the position of the tip of the needle
at intervertebral foramen using anteroposterior (AP)
and lateral fluoroscopic images, an epidural cath-
eter was placed in the epidural space by inserting
through a Tuohy needle.

After negative aspiration for cerebrospinal fluid and
blood, non-ionic contrast material iohexol (Omnip-
aque) was injected (3 ml) from the catheter in frac-
tions, and the catheter was confirmed to be in the
epidural space using AP and lateral fluoroscopic im-
ages (Figure 2). The catheter was advanced to the
upper part of L3 vertebra level. The patient was then
positioned supine, and 3 ml (lidocaine 1.5% and
1:200,000 epinephrine) was injected as epidural test
dose. Following confirmation of the catheter’s place,
12 ml of a 0.5% isobaric bupivacaine was injected in
fractions. When the blockade level reached T8, the
patient was positioned properly and the operation
was initiated. The operation lasted 4 hours. The pa-
tient required a local anesthetic dose twice until the
end of the operation, and a total of 20 ml of a 0.5%
isobaric bupivacaine was administered during the
operation. During 2 postoperative days, the patient-
controlled epidural analgesia was continued. On the
6th day, the patient was discharged from the ortho-
pedics ward with recommendations.

**Discussion**

General anesthesia may pose high risk in patients
with AS because of the known respiratory problems,
cardiovascular organ involvement, and difficulty
with intubation. Although neuroaxial anesthe-
sia seems to be a great alternative, narrow epidural
space and ossifications in ligamentum flavum can
cause application challenges and even make the
blockade impossible. We describe a case of epi-
Transforaminal epidural catheterization via transforaminal route under fluoroscopy guidance from ankylosing spondylitis undergoing total hip replacement surgery.

Technical difficulties are also increase the risk of complications, including spinal hematoma. Epidural catheter placement may be technically difficult due to restricted flexion of the lumbar spine and ossification of interspinous ligaments and it often leads to complete failure. Neuroaxial blocks are technically challenging and local anesthetic toxicity due to intravascular injection or an unpredictable level of anesthesia for epidural injection.

Fluoroscopically guided transforaminal epidural steroid injection is administered for treatment of a chronic radicular lower limb pain. Major and minor complications regarding transforaminal epidural steroid injection applications were reported in the literature. Transforaminal injection of minor and major complications include vasovagal reaction, dural puncture, intradiscal injection, infections, bleeding (epidural hematoma, spinal hematoma). There are also neurological complications such as stroke, spinal cord injury, arachnoiditis which are associated with epidural steroid injection not transforaminal technique.

However, there is no data on utilization of transforaminal epidural catheterization for surgical purposes under fluoroscopy guidance. Only the one case report, 23 gauge quinkeys spinal needle was inserted under fluoroscopically guided transforaminal single shot epidural injection for ureteroscopic stone removal. We used to achieve in patients with AS by epidural catheterization via transforaminal route under fluoroscopy guidance and a successful anesthesia management during the surgery.

Anatomical changes that occur in AS, such as fusion of lumbar vertebrae, narrow interlaminar arena and calcification of posterior longitudinal ligament, adequate mouth opening. These changes can lead difficulty management of airway and epidural or spinal anesthesia so that alternative managements can used the patient. Peripheral nerve blocks have performed successfully of guided ultrasound (US) and fluoroscopy. But US guided is not gold standard for deeper structures and spinal procedure. And it can performed with guided computed tomography or fluoroscopic performs the gold standard in the lumbar spine. So we decided to perform epidural catheterization via guided fluoroscopy and management of epidural anesthesia was successful.

Intubation assist methods such as awake fiberoptic intubation and video laryngoscopy can be used to overcome the difficulties in patients performed general anesthesia with AS. According to one previous report, they could not perform neuroaxial anesthesia in one case due to ossification of the ligamentum flavum in the lumbar vertebrae and narrowing of the interlaminar entry area. Ankylosing spondylitis can lead to difficulty in neuroaxial anesthesia to change of ossified vertebral column and narrowed intervertebral spaces. Narrowing of interlaminar area can lead to traumatic complication such as difficult transforaminal catheterization, direct vascular damage secondary to needle replacement, and nervous root injury irritation. We did not have any technical difficulties or any complication in our case.

In conclusion, we showed that a successful neuroaxial anesthesia can be relatively safe alternative in patients with AS by epidural catheterization via transforaminal route under fluoroscopy guidance. Therefore, it should be performed by an experienced physician or under the guidance of an experienced technician and radiologic imaging must be used. It should be kept in mind that management of a case of ankylosing spondylitis can be very challenging as the airway and the central neuraxial blockade are extremely difficult. The anesthesia management should be planned an alternative option for airway management and fluoroscopy may lead to predictable success in the AS of transforaminal epidural catheterization.

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