

# LUMBO-SACRAL EPIDURAL ABSCESS FOLLOWING AN ACUPUNCTURE PROCEDURE: A CASE REPORT

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**Aim:** Report of a rare complication of acupuncture.

**Methods:** A 40 years old man with underlying poorly controlled diabetes mellitus (DM), hypertension and bronchial asthma went for a session of acupuncture to alleviate his low back pain. A week after the acupuncture, he developed worsening back pain associated with urinary incontinence and saddle anaesthesia. The low back pain was excruciating and not relieved by rest and over the counter pain killers. Physical examination revealed an alert person, not septic looking but had severe tenderness over the lower back with positive straight leg raising test bilaterally. Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) of the lumbo-sacral region demonstrated epidural abscess over L4/L5 to S3/4 region with displacement of the nerve roots anteriorly.

**Results:** Emergency L4-L5 laminectomies and wash out were done. A size-8 naso-gastric (NG) tube was inserted to aspirate the purulent pus and facilitate the washout as the abscess tracked down to S3/S4 region. The symptoms related to epidural abscess resolved after the surgery and a course of intravenous cloxacillin. The intra-operative pus grew *Staphylococcus aureus*. Post operative MRI 2 months after the surgery revealed a normal epidural space without any collection.

**Conclusion:** This case revealed the danger of having acupuncture in an unlicensed traditional sinseh. It should also be avoided in patients with immunocompromised status such as those with poorly controlled DM. Apart from that, acupuncture practitioners should pay serious attention to the sterility and safety of their procedure. One novel method of draining the abscess is by using NG tube without the need to perform long section laminectomies.