

# TB or Not TB, That is the Question: A rare case of C1 Cervical Tuberculosis

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## INTRODUCTION:

Spinal Tuberculosis (TB) an uncommon case of recent years with the new villain in town (Covid 19), we are seeing less and less of TB spine cases reported. WHO reported a significant decline from 7.1 million in 2019 to 5.8 million in 2020<sup>[1]</sup>. That is also the case here in Melaka with a significant decline in cases of TB spine reported (6 new cases in 2021). But only ONE case involving the cervical spine. What makes this case special? It involves the C1 and C2 spine

## REPORT:

This is a case of a 27-year-old lady presented with weakness of all 4 limbs for a week, headache, slurred speech, dysphagia, shortness of breath with significant constitutional symptoms for 2 months.

Examination reveals cervical spine tenderness with limited ROM. Neurologically, absent power of all cervical and lumbar levels with reduce in sensation from C3 with normal reflexes.

Erythrocyte Sedimentation Rate and C-Reactive Protein was 98mm/hr. and 180mg/l. Sputum AFB and Mantoux test were normal. Cervical radiograph showed lytic lesions of C2 till C4 with widened soft tissue shadow over C2.

MRI showed extensive bone marrow oedema with wide spread collection. The C1 and C2 collection causing adjacent bone erosion and displacement of dens resulting in severe spinal cord stenosis and oedema. Bone erosion seen throughout the spine.

Patient was started on anti-TB but no surgery or biopsy as patient and family refused strongly.

After three (3) months, patient had started regaining power over bilateral upper limbs but still requires oxygenation.

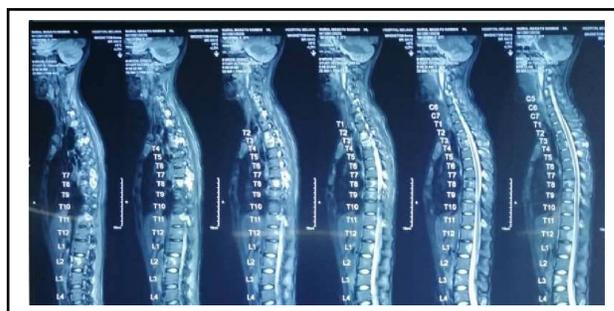


Figure 1: Whole Spine MRI

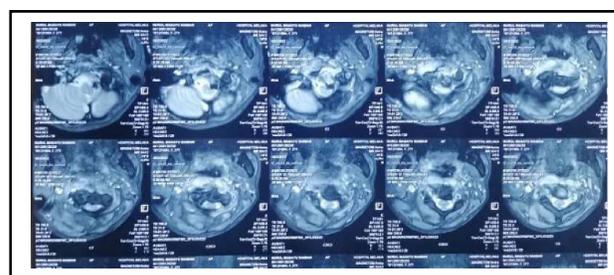


Figure 2: Cervical MRI Axial View

## CONCLUSION:

Despite the reduce incidence of TB Spine cases due to the pandemic, it is still one of the diagnosis that cannot be overlooked. The severity of cases due to the late presentation may even mislead us in making a diagnosis.

## REFERENCES:

1. Global Tuberculosis Report 2021, WHO
2. He M, Xu H, Zhao J, Wang Z (2014) Anterior debridement, decompression, bone grafting, and instrumentation for lower cervical spine tuberculosis. Spine J 14(4): 619-627