INNOVATIVE MANAGEMENT OF A CASE OF LUMBAR DISC PROLAPSE IN ANTARCTICA

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The objective of the case report is to present the improvised management of a case of Lumbar Disc Prolapse with Sciatica in a remote location. Our patient, a 43 year old mechanic from the Indian Antarctic Station, Maitri presented with acute low back ache radiating to the left lower limb following heavy physical activity during a convoy. He was clinically diagnosed as a case of Lumbar Disc Prolapse with Sciatica. He was put on continuous traction using a device improvised out of a mountaineering harness, rope, karabiner and barbell weights. Treatment was guided by online specialist advice. As a result of the treatment given, backache and lower limb pain reduced substantially after 20 days of continuous traction. Straight leg raising increased from 30° to 60°. The patient was gradually mobilised and resumed normal convoy duties after 3 months. Usually, a case of disc prolapse at L5-S1 level typically presents with low backache following heavy physical labour that may radiate along the back of thigh & calf. A positive Straight Leg Raising test, as in our patient, indicates acute disc prolapse. Our patient was diagnosed with Lumbar Disc Prolapse purely clinically since MRI facilities were not available. When the patient does not improve with bed rest, traction may cause remission, as it did in our patient. Since a lumbar traction kit was not available to us, a mountaineering harness was substituted for successful improvisation. The conclusions that can be drawn from this case report are that clinical judgement is necessary for diagnosis of Lumbar Disc Prolapse in the absence of MRI and that improvised traction may be useful in the treatment of Lumbar Disc Prolapse.