Piriformis syndrome in two professional cyclists

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Introduction.– Piriformis syndromes are at the origin of sciatic clinical signs, which are often underestimated, and of delayed diagnosis. The association of neurological and gluteal pain is reproduced by active and passive piriform tension revealed during external hip rotation. After excluding other conditions, sciatic nerve suffering appears to be related to stretching or compression mechanisms occurring notably during the practice of sports and favored by muscular abnormalities.

Observation.– Two subjects practicing high level cycling presented pain at the pelvis with an unsystematized distribution in the lower limb. Pain was provoked by sports practice and aggravated by the sitting position. In one patient, a calf muscle atrophy was present. Radical surgical treatment could be discussed. The piriform syndrome must be evoked when sciatic pain related to certain sports such as cycling.

Further readings

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Keywords: Exercise-induced compartment syndrome; Chronic compartment syndrome; Botulinum toxin; Leg; Sport; Intramuscular pressure

Introduction.– Exercise-induced compartment syndrome (ECS) of the lower limb results in leg pain at exercise. Currently, the only treatment is surgical fasciotomy. Botulinum toxin A (BTA) has been successfully used in the treatment of muscle hypertrophy and the treatment of myofascial pain, but it has never been used to treat ECS. The aim of this work was to test the hypothesis that BTA is an effective treatment for ECS to avoid surgery.

Methods.– This was an open trial. After excluding other conditions, lateral anterior ECS was confirmed among runners by measuring the intramuscular pressure (IMP). BTA (Dysport®) was injected into each of the muscles of the pathological compartment(s) under electrical stimulation guidance. Exercise-induced pain, strength of injected muscles and IMP were assessed. Twenty-five patients were included. Six patients were treated twice because of recurrence. Typical IMP in the anterior compartment was 63 mmHg one minute after stopping exercise and 41 mmHg at 5 minutes. In the lateral compartment the IMP was 58 mmHg at 1 min and 48 mmHg at 5 minutes.

Results.– Exercise-induced pain disappeared in 68% of the patients during the first month and in all the others between 1 and 5 months, excepting 1 patient. In 4 patients, a slight weakness that disappeared between 1 and 5 months was noted. The sensation of slight instability disappeared before 3 months in 84% of the cases and never inhibited early resumption of running. Three months after treatment, the IMP were normalized: in the anterior compartment 21.4 mmHg at 1 min and 14.5 mmHg at 5 min; in the lateral compartment 19.7 mmHg and 9.9 mmHg. The efficiency of the treatment was 10 months on average. Exercise-induced pain recurred in 8 patients in 6 to 30 months.