

Radiographic image suggesting broken epidural catheter: a case report

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Background

- Epidural catheter breakage or fracture is a rare phenomenon
 - 1 in 60,000 or 0.002%¹
- Most likely time of epidural breakage is at time of removal, usually from difficult extraction



X-ray from case report of retained fractured epidural catheter. Pincioli, R., Fumagalli, R. BMC Anesthesiol 2015.

Case Presentation

Patient Presentation

- 35 year old G4P2012 at 33 weeks 6 days with placenta accreta spectrum disorder
- Planned repeat cesarean delivery and possible hysterectomy

History

- BMI 41, two prior cesarean deliveries

Labor Analgesia

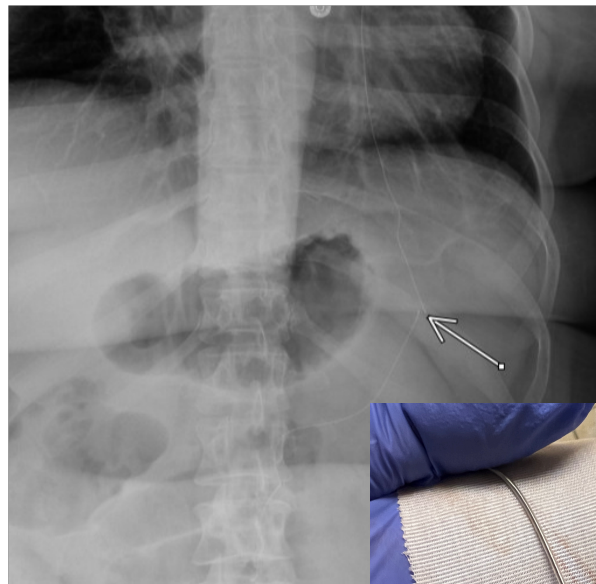
- Uneventful combined spinal epidural

Conversion to GA

- Uncontrolled blood loss necessitated hysterectomy with additional surgical team

Closing x-ray

- *“a very small focus of catheter discontinuity in the medial aspect of the left upper quadrant.”*



Discussion

- Potential catheter breakage while moving of the patient
- Wire-reinforced catheters often have translucent (and radiolucent) window through which aspirated fluid may be viewed.
- Most fractured catheters occur due to traumatic removal.
- Actual incidence of catheter fracture leading to retention is extremely rare/not known.
- Retention from knotting thought to be more prevalent; based on case reports, estimated at 0.0015%²
- If in doubt, obtain imaging!



Arrow® FlexTip Plus® Epidural Catheter

References

- C. Collier, Epidural catheter breakage: a possible mechanism, International Journal of Obstetric Anesthesia, 2000
- Chang, P. Acta Anaesthesiol Taiwan (2010)