Vertebral erosion and paraplegia due to expanding thoracic aneurysm

Daniel Pereda, Carlos Uriarte, Clemente Barriuso, Carlos-A. Mestres*

Department of Cardiovascular Surgery, Hospital Clinico, University of Barcelona, Villarroel 170, 08036 Barcelona, Spain

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Thoracobdominal aneurysms may erode the spine leading to compressive myelopathy. In this 69-year-old paraplegic, imaging showed thoracic aneurysm at T8-T9 with destruction of vertebral bodies (Figs. 1 and 2). The aorta was successfully replaced with a 16 mm cryopreserved homograft. Cultures showed no growth. Paraplegia is a devastating complication of aortic aneurysms.

Fig. 1. A preoperative CT-scan showing the complete destruction of the vertebral body due to the expansive aneurysm.

Fig. 2. Preoperative magnetic resonance study showing the size of the aneurysm and vertebral erosion. There are marked changes of pneumonitis in the left lung due to pneumonia.