Distal intersection syndrome: An unusual cause of forearm pain\footnote{Please cite this article as: Pijoán Moratalla C, Blanco Caceres BA, Bachiller Corral J. Síndrome de la intersección distal. Una causa poco frecuente de dolor en el antebrazo. Reumatoil Clin. 2020;16:128–129.}

Síndrome de la intersección distal. Una causa poco frecuente de dolor en el antebrazo

Dear Editor,

Pain in the carpus and forearm is a frequent reason for rheumatology consultation. Overuse tendonitis and repeated microtrauma are among the most frequent mechanical causes. De Quervain’s tendonitis is one of the most common conditions, although there are also other less common disorders with a similar clinical presentation.

We present the case of a 28-year-old woman, with no clinical history of interest, who consulted due to the sudden onset of pain and swelling on the dorsal surface of the distal third of her right forearm with marked functional limitation on extension of the carpus and first finger. The patient is an administrative worker, whose only recent history of note was having rowed during her recent holidays. Examination revealed local heat and swelling on the dorsolateral region of the forearm around 5 cm proximal to the radiocarpal joint. On resisted extension of the first finger, the patient’s pain increased, and there was marked crepitus at this level. Finkelstein’s manoeuvre can be positive, but the determining finding for diagnosis is the painful area being located at around 5 cm from the radiocarpal joint (Image 2).

Diagnosis is usually clinical, depending on the site of the pain and crepitus, and ultrasound can be used to confirm findings of tenosynovitis.\footnote{Please cite this article as: Pijoán Moratalla C, Blanco Caceres BA, Bachiller Corral J. Síndrome de la intersección distal. Una causa poco frecuente de dolor en el antebrazo. Reumatoil Clin. 2020;16:128–129.}\footnote{Please cite this article as: Pijoán Moratalla C, Blanco Caceres BA, Bachiller Corral J. Síndrome de la intersección distal. Una causa poco frecuente de dolor en el antebrazo. Reumatoil Clin. 2020;16:128–129.} Differential diagnosis must be established with De Quervain’s tenosynovitis, Wartenberg syndrome (compressive neuropathy of the superficial sensory branch of the radial nerve) and common extensor compartment.\footnote{Please cite this article as: Pijoán Moratalla C, Blanco Caceres BA, Bachiller Corral J. Síndrome de la intersección distal. Una causa poco frecuente de dolor en el antebrazo. Reumatoil Clin. 2020;16:128–129.} Finkelstein’s manoeuvre can be positive, but the determining finding for diagnosis is the painful area being located at around 5 cm from the radiocarpal joint (Image 2).

Treatment is based on the local application of cold, rest with anti-inflammatory drugs, and local injections are often very useful for severe or recurring cases. Surgical treatment to release the II extensor compartment might be necessary for cases that are limiting associated with sports activities.

In sum, distal intersection syndrome should be considered in the differential diagnosis of De Quervain’s tenosynovitis of atypical presentation, the location of the most medial and proximal pain, and the presence of crepitus are the key to diagnosis.

Image 1. Transverse ultrasound image of the distal region of the right forearm. Showing tenosynovitis (arrow) of the tendons of the I and II extensor compartment as they cross, AL: abductor longus of the first finger; EB: extensor brevis of the first finger; ECRL: extensor carpi radialis brevis; ECRL: extensor carpi radialis longus; R: radius.
A B

Area of pain in De Quervain’s syndrome

Area of pain in distal intersection syndrome

- Extensor carpi radialis brevis
- Extensor carpi radialis longus
- Extensor brevis of the first finger
- Abductor longus of the first finger

Image 2. (A) Anatomical path of the tendons involved in distal intersection syndrome. (B) Site of pain in distal intersection syndrome and in De Quervain’s tendonitis.

Conflict of interests

The authors have no conflict of interests to declare.

References


Cristina Pijoán Moratalla, a,∗ Boris Anthony Blanco Caceres, b Javier Bachiller Corral b

a Servicio de Reumatología, Hospital Universitario Ramón y Cajal, Madrid, Spain
b Servicio de Reumatología, Hospital Universitario de Cruces, Baracaldo, Vizcaya, Spain

∗ Corresponding author. E-mail address: crispmoratalla@gmail.com (C. Pijoán Moratalla).

https://doi.org/10.1016/j.reumae.2018.02.002
2173-5743/ © 2018 Elsevier España, S.L.U. and Sociedad Española de Reumatología y Colegio Mexicano de Reumatología. All rights reserved.