Arachnoiditis

Arachnoiditis is an inflammatory response of the arachnoid. The arachnoid is one of three coverings or membranes that cover the brain (*meninges*). They envelop the brain and spinal cord.

CAUSES

Arachnoiditis may be caused from:

- Infection. This includes syphilis and tubercular meningitis.
- Damage caused by an accident (*trauma*). This includes damage caused by:
  - Surgery.
  - Lumbar puncture.
  - Spinal anesthesia.
- A diagnostic procedure called a myelogram. It is performed in patients prior to spinal surgery.

SYMPTOMS

Problems (*symptoms*) include:

- Numbness.
- Tingling.
- Stinging and burning pain in the legs.

TREATMENT

The goal of treatment should be to return the patient to a workable (*functional*) role in society.

- Conservative therapy is generally recommended.
  - Pain management is one example.
- In patients whose arachnoiditis is progressive, surgery to remove adhesions is only slightly effective. This is because scar tissue continues to develop. Also, surgery exposes the already irritated spinal cord to additional trauma.

There is no cure for this disease. For most patients, it is a disabling disease. It causes pain that is difficult to manage and neurological problems. As the disease progresses, some symptoms may increase. They may also become permanent. Few people with this disorder are able to continue working. In some cases, progressive paralysis of the lower half of the body may occur. This is known as paraplegia.

RESEARCH BEING DONE

Within the NINDS research programs, arachnoiditis is addressed primarily through studies associated with pain research. NINDS vigorously pursues a research program. It seeks new treatments for pain and nerve damage. The ultimate goal is to reverse debilitating conditions such as arachnoiditis.

Research is continually being done to learn more about this problem.

Provided by The National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke

Document Released: 12/08/2003 Document Re-Released: 09/26/2009
ExitCare® Patient Information ©2011 ExitCare, LLC.