Central Cord Syndrome

Central cord syndrome is a form of *incomplete spinal cord injury*. This means that some of the signals from the brain to the body are not received. It causes a reduced function (*impairment*) in the arms and hands, and to a lesser extent, in the legs. The brain's ability to send and receive signals to and from parts of the body below the site of *trauma* is affected, but it is not entirely blocked. The site of trauma is the area of the spinal cord that is damaged or injured.

CAUSES

This syndrome is usually the result of trauma. It is associated with damage to the large nerve fibers that carry information directly from the cerebral cortex (thinking part of the brain) to the spinal cord. These nerves are particularly important for hand and arm function.

SYMPTOMS

Symptoms may include:

- Paralysis.
- Loss of fine control of movements in the arms and hands.
- Possible impairment of leg movements (although this is less likely to occur).
- Sensory loss below the site of the spinal injury.
- Loss of bladder control.

The overall amount and type of workable (*functional*) loss depends on how severely the nerves of the spinal cord are damaged.

TREATMENT

There is no cure for central cord syndrome. Although there is no standard course of treatment, the treatment program often includes medication therapy, rest, and possibly even surgery.

The prognosis for individuals with central cord syndrome varies. Patients who receive medical intervention soon after their injury often have good outcomes and recover substantial function. The ability to walk is recovered in most of the cases, but some impairment may remain.

RESEARCH BEING DONE

The NINDS (National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke) conducts and supports an extensive research program on spinal cord injuries. Much of this research is aimed at finding ways to, prevent, treat, and cure these disorders.

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

Information provided by The National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke.

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