Specific Question:

In adults with neural leg pain (sciatica), is a caudal epidural as effective as physiotherapy in reducing pain, return to work and restoring function?

Clinical bottom line

There are no large, high quality trials that compare caudal epidural injections and physiotherapy in order to answer this specific question. There are NICE guidelines on the management of adults with sciatica (NG59).

Why is this important?

Patients with sciatica often have conservative treatment prior to invasive treatments. It is important for clinicians to have an understanding of the evidence underpinning treatments so they can assist patients when making informed treatment choices.

Search timeframe:
Initial Search 2005-2015
Updated search 2006-2016

Inclusion Criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Search terms</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population and Setting</td>
<td>Adults with neural leg pain (sciatica)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intervention or Exposure</td>
<td>Caudal epidural injection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparison, if any</td>
<td>Physiotherapy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Outcomes of interest e.g. Visual analogue scale, Range of motion, quality of life, function</td>
<td>Pain Return to work Function Cost</td>
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Previous CAT lead: Kay Stevenson
Date CAT completed: Aug 2015

Updated CAT lead: Lucy Huckfield
Date CAT to be reviewed: Jan 2021
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### Types of studies

| Effectiveness | National clinical practice guidelines, systematic reviews, meta-analysis, RCTs |

### Routine Databases Searched

Clinical Knowledge Summaries, PEDro, BMJ Updates, Clinical Evidence, TRIP, Database, NICE, HTA, Bandolier, The Cochrane Library, Medline, Cinahl, EMBASE, PsycINFO, Professional websites, Joanna Briggs Institute, Web of Science, Sports Discuss and Pubmed

### Results of the searches:

#### Initial search 2015

- 318 unique studies downloaded
- 29 potentially relevant
- 289 excluded studies
- 1 included studies

#### Results of updated search -08/09/2018

- 37 unique studies downloaded
- 2 potentially relevant
- 35 excluded studies
- 0 included study
Conclusions

There are no trials that compare caudal epidurals and physiotherapy to answer this question.

Current practice is currently a stepped approach in managing patients with sciatica.

However, there are practice guidelines to support the management of patients with sciatica. Epidural injections of local anaesthetic and steroid can be considered in patients with severe disc-related sciatica. Epidural injections are not recommended for patients with central spinal canal stenosis.

References

NICE guideline (NG59) Low back pain and sciatica in over 16s: assessment and management November 2016
https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/NG59