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Speeding Up Time: An Old Back in a Young Athlete

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Speeding Up Time: An Old Back in a Young Athlete

Carey Wagoner DO, Greg Canty MD

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HPI

- 16 year old female dancer presents with several months of chronic bilateral, R>L, low back pain.
- Participates in 14-16 hours of competitive dance per week
- No known injury
- Pain worse with extension (landing jumps)
- Seeing PT for mechanical low back pain but is not responding to treatment
- No red flag or neurological symptoms

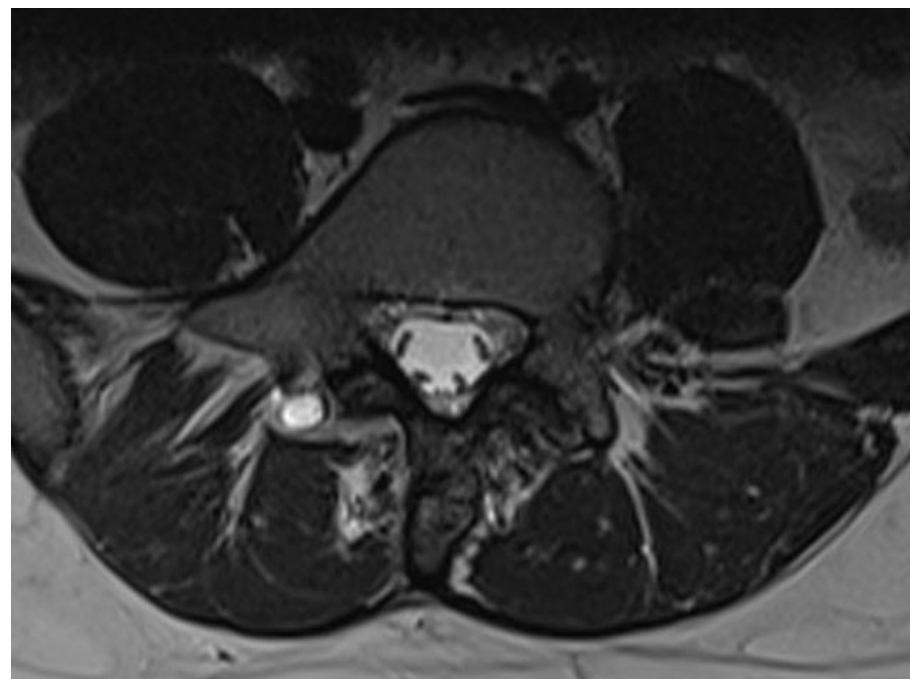
Physical Exam

- Inspection: No bruising/swelling
- Palpation: paraspinal lumbar tenderness bilaterally, R>L, No midline tenderness
- ROM: Pain in terminal extension only
- Strength: 5/5 in lower extremity without pain
- Special testing: Negative stork test, negative slump, negative FABER. Adams test positive: Scoliometer 8-9 degrees.

Differential

1. Spondylolysis
2. Mechanical low back pain
3. Other extension based back pain
4. Idiopathic scoliosis
5. Herniated disc

Imaging



Lumbar xray – normal

Lumbar MRI - Findings demonstrated small bilateral synovial cysts of the L4-L5 facet joints

Treatment/Outcome

- Referral for IR guided Steroid injection of the synovial cysts
- Follow up appointment: Complete resolution of symptoms and gradual return to dance

Discussion

The prevalence of back pain in the young athlete is 20-30% and varies with type of sport¹. Spinal synovial cysts is an uncommon cause in this group. However, repetitive rotation or extension is likely the cause in our patient. Typical presentation is of chronic pain that is worse in the mornings and with extension. Radicular symptoms are uncommon². Treatment is relative rest, though corticosteroid injections can be both diagnostic and therapeutic. Surgery is rarely indicated³.

1. Patel DR, Kinsella E. Evaluation and management of lower backpain in young athletes. *Transl Pediatr.* 2017;6(3):225-235. doi:10.21037/tp.2017.06.01
2. Alexander CE, Cascio MA, Varacallo M. Lumbosacral Facet Syndrome. [Updated 2023 Aug 4]. In: StatPearls [Internet]. Treasure Island (FL): StatPearls Publishing; 2023 Jan-.
3. Bydon M, Papadimitriou K, Witham T, et al. Treatment of spinal synovial cysts. *World Neurosurg.* 2013;79(2):375-380. doi:10.1016/j.wneu.2012.08.016



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