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Spinal Cord Neoplasms

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Abstract

Objective: This article discusses the diagnostic approach to patients with suspected neoplasms of the spinal cord and reviews the most common primary and metastatic spinal neoplasms and their presentations.

Latest developments: Neoplasms of the spinal cord are rare entities that can involve the spinal cord parenchyma, the dura and leptomeninges, or the extradural space. The most common intramedullary spinal cord neoplasms are primary spinal cord tumors, including ependymomas, pilocytic astrocytomas, and diffuse midline gliomas. The most common primary neoplasms of the spine are intradural extramedullary spinal meningiomas, whereas primary neoplasms of the leptomeninges are rare. Advances in molecular characterization of spinal cord tumors and recent clinical trials of these rare entities are expanding the repertoire of systemic therapy options for primary spinal cord neoplasms. Metastases to the spine most often affect the extradural space. Metastatic epidural spinal cord compression is a neurologic emergency that requires a rapid, multidisciplinary response to preserve neurologic function.

Essential points: Neurologists should understand the diagnostic approach to neoplasms of the spinal cord. Knowledge of the most common spinal cord neoplasms will allow for appropriate management and optimal patient care.

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