

Case 34 (October 30 2008): [N Engl J Med. 359\(18\):1942-1949](#)

Demographic: Female, 58 yrs, Not pregnant, America North, General speciality

Clinical features extracted from the case and entered into the query

box:

severe neck pain
fever
headaches
neck swelling
tingling and numbness in her fingers
chills
cough
swallowing difficulty

Synonyms used by Isabel for the above query:

cough
swallowing difficulty
fever
headaches
chills

STOP !

Before you read further you might want to construct your own:

- Complete differential diagnosis
- Final diagnosis

In the following section you will find:

- The differential diagnosis constructed by the MGH panel
- The final diagnosis of the case
- Which of the MGH panel differential diagnoses did Isabel contain
- Did Isabel suggest the Final diagnosis

Differential Diagnoses considered by the MGH panel:

Tuberculosis
Brucellosis

Final Diagnosis of the case according to NEJM:

S. aureus Osteomyelitis with Epidural Abscess

Differential Diagnoses of the case as given by Isabel:

Tuberculosis – under Nervous system heading
Brucellosis – under Infectious diseases heading

Was the final diagnosis given by Isabel:

Yes, Osteomyelitis under Infectious diseases heading
Epidural Abscess under Nervous system heading

Isabel Differential:

| - INFECTIOUS DISEASES >> click to collapse | - NERVOUS SYSTEM DISORDERS >> click to collapse |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Measles Infection ? RD <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Bacterial Meningitis ? RD <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Osteomyelitis and Septic Arthritis ○ RD <div style="border: 1px solid black; background-color: #fff9c4; padding: 5px; margin-top: 10px;"> <p>Why did this diagnosis come up ?</p> <p>We matched the terms: fever fevers chill chills neck pain swell swelling numb numbness</p> <hr/> <p>Degree of match between query entered and isabel database (Not clinical probability): 48%</p> </div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meningococcal Disease ? RD <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yersinia Infection ? RD <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Herpes Simplex Virus Infection ? RD Lyme Disease ? RD <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Anthrax ? RD <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Brucellosis ? RD Mumps Infection ? RD Nocardia Infection ? RD <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Gonococcal Infection ? RD Babesiosis ? RD Listeriosis ? RD Tularemia ? RD | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Transient Ischemic Attack ? RD <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Multiple Sclerosis ? RD Diabetic Neuropathy ? RD <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Cervical Spondylosis ? RD Carpal Tunnel Syndrome ? RD <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Spinal Infections ○ RD <div style="border: 1px solid black; background-color: #fff9c4; padding: 5px; margin-top: 10px;"> <p>Why did this diagnosis come up ?</p> <p>We matched the terms: fever fevers headache headaches neck pain tingl tingling numb numbness</p> <hr/> <p>Degree of match between query entered and isabel database (Not clinical probability): 61%</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Epidural AbscessPostoperative Spinal InfectionsTB Spine / Pott's DiseaseVertebral Osteomyelitis </div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Syringomyelia ? RD Thoracic Outlet Syndrome ? RD |
| | <p>+ RESPIRATORY DISORDERS << click to expand</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Asthma ? RD <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Lung Neoplasms ? RD |