Idiopathic spinal cord herniation – differential diagnosis and management

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Idiopathic spinal cord herniation is a rare pathology occurring in the anterior thoracic spine in middle aged patients. The patients present either with Brown-Sequard syndrome, or progressive myelopathy. MRI and CT myelogram are necessary for the diagnosis, and they reveal a ventral displacement of the spinal cord over one or two segments of the thoracic spine. The differentiation between spinal cord herniation and a dorsal arachnoid cyst displacing the cord is often challenging and depends on multitude of subtle radiographic findings. A delay in accurate diagnosis may lead to significant neurological deficits and inappropriate surgery. We review here the current approach to diagnosis and treatment of the idiopathic spinal cord herniation.