

Military Neck

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A 28-year-old male, a software engineer by profession, presented to the Otorhinolaryngology outpatient clinic with progressive neck pain and stiffness along with decreased range of motion since six months. There was no associated dysphagia, odynophagia, ear pain or excessive coughing. On physical examination, he had cervical muscle spasm more on the right side compared to left. Rest of the clinical examination was unremarkable. X ray neck lateral view (Fig. 1) showed abnormal straightening of the cervical spine, which led to a diagnosis of flat neck syndrome. Loss of cervical curvature is also referred as cervical kyphosis, straight neck, military neck (as if standing in attention), and when the reduction in the degree of the curve goes into the opposite direction of normal is called as reversed neck curve [1]. The loss of a cervical curvature makes the muscles in anterior compartment of the neck far less flexible and may overstretch other muscles like the levator scapula and sternocleidomastoid causing restriction in range of motion. It also causes excessive stress on the ligament nuchae. If left untreated it can also lead to Military back, a condition characterized by abnormal curvatures in other parts of spine. All these factors reduces the shock absorbing capacity of the spine and predisposes to cervical spinal injury [2]. The most common cause of military neck is poor posture. Although degenerative disc disease, iatrogenic trauma, whiplash injuries and repetitive abnormal movements can precipitate military neck. Physical therapy, neck braces, and analgesics are generally prescribed for treatment, unless the curve of the neck is pressing on the spinal cord, in which surgery may be warranted [3]. The prognosis of this condition is good. Our patient was advised to avoid habit of constantly looking down

on to the computers along with neck stretching and strengthening exercises with analgesics for 3 months. The patient remained asymptomatic at six months follow-up.

Consent

Informed written consent has been obtained from the patient for publication of this image.



Fig. X ray neck lateral view showing classical "Military neck"-loss of cervical lordosis

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