

# A RARE CASE OF HERPES ZOSTER SCIATICA MIMICKING SYMPTOMATOLOGY CAUSED BY LUMBAR DISC HERNIATION

D. Giotis <sup>1</sup>, C. Konstantinidis <sup>1</sup>, S. Plakoutsis <sup>1</sup>, C. Kotsias <sup>1</sup>, C. Galanis <sup>1</sup>, A. Konstantinou<sup>1</sup>, K. Konidaris<sup>1</sup>, D. Tsiampas <sup>1</sup>, D. Vardakas <sup>1</sup>, V. Panagiotopoulos <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Orthopaedic Department, General Hospital of Ioannina, Ioannina, Greece

## INTRODUCTION

- ✓ Herpes zoster is viral infection caused by the varicella-zoster virus (VZV)
- ✓ During the primary infection, the virus causes varicella and then remains latent in the paravertebral ganglia
- ✓ With advancing age or immunosuppression cell-mediated immunity to VZV declines and virus can reactivate from latency to cause zoster (shingles) with dermatomal distribution

**AIM:** To present a rare case of herpes zoster sciatica mimicking symptomatology caused by lumbar disc herniation

## MATERIAL & METHOD

♀ 46-year-old → low back pain & sciatica during the last 2 days

- Clinical examination
  - Inability to raise the left leg above 20°
  - Positive Laseque sign
  - Without other neurological symptoms
- X-Rays → No findings
- Lumbar spine MRI (3 days later) → No abnormal findings

## MATERIAL & METHOD

- 5 days later → New clinical examination: Burning pain in the ipsilateral knee & herpes blisters following the distribution of left sciatic nerve



Figures 1-3: Herpes blisters (skin lesion) in the 5<sup>th</sup> lumbar spinal dermatome

## RESULTS

- Evaluation from dermatologists → Diagnosis of herpes zoster
- Treatment → Oral administration of acyclovir
- 3 days after treatment → The pain in the left lower extremity was of obvious relief
- 10 days later was free of symptoms
- 6 months later → No signs of relapse

## CONCLUSIONS

- In cases of sciatica especially in people with a weakened immune system due to underlying medical conditions, such as cancer, diabetes, liver or kidney disease, alcoholism, and HIV → Herpes zoster should be taken into consideration in differential diagnosis
- Particularly in early stages → Herpes zoster may mimic symptomatology caused by lumbar disc herniation, misleading the clinician