Referred back pain is multi-segmental or band-like.

Escalating pain which is poorly responsive to treatment (incl medication).

Different character or site to previous symptoms.

Funny feelings, odd sensations or heavy legs (multi-segmental).

Lying flat increases back pain.

Agonising pain causing anguish and despair.

Gait disturbance, unsteadiness, especially on stairs (not just a limp).

Sleep grossly disturbed due to pain being worse at night.

NB – Established motor / sensory / bladder / bowel disturbances late signs.

EARLY WARNING SIGNS OF MSCC
METASTATIC SPINAL CORD COMPRESSION (MSCC)

KEY RED FLAGS

Past medical history of cancer
(but note 25% of patients do not have a diagnosed primary)

Early diagnosis is essential
as the prognosis is severely impaired once paralysis occurs

A combination of Red Flags increases suspicion
(the more red flags the higher the risk and the greater the urgency)

To access the Greater Manchester and Cheshire MSCC guidelines go to:
www.christie.nhs.uk (search 'spinal cord compression')

The Christie NHS Foundation Trust