



EARLY WARNING SIGNS OF MSCC

Greenhalgh S, Turnpenney J, Richards L, Selfe J (2010)

- R** Referred back pain is multi-segmental or band-like
- E** Escalating pain which is poorly responsive to treatment (incl medication)
- D** Different character or site to previous symptoms
- F** Funny feelings, odd sensations or heavy legs (multi-segmental)
- L** Lying flat increases back pain
- A** Agonising pain causing anguish and despair
- G** Gait disturbance, unsteadiness, especially on stairs (not just a limp)
- S** Sleep grossly disturbed due to pain being worse at night

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



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