Teaching NeuroImages: Schwannoma of the cauda equina

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Figure MRI of the lumbar spine

T1-weighted sequence after gadodiamide (A) and T2-weighted sequence (B). Cystic lesion ranging from L2 to the S1 level with contrast material uptake in the cystic wall (arrows).

A 50-year-old woman reported several years of progressive lower back pain in the supine position. Results of the neurologic examination were normal. MRI of the lumbar spine was performed (figure). After surgery, which revealed an intraspinal intradural schwannoma, the patient had no neurologic complaints. Schwannoma of the cauda equina usually develops at the L1–L2 level and causes back pain, sometimes limited to the supine position.¹ MRI can distinguish this entity from

disc herniation, which is sometimes a pitfall in the diagnosis.²

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