Lower back pain caused by tophaceous gout of the spine

A 75-year-old man with a history of gout presented with 5 days of fever and diffuse lower back pain. His temperature was 101.5 °F, and he had tenderness over both thoracic and lumbar vertebrae. His neurologic examination was largely normal. Erythrocyte sedimentation rate was 100 mm/h, and serum uric acid 18.6 mg/dL. Subsequent workup, including MRI and biopsy (figure), was consistent with tophaceous gout of the spine. Spinal gout is rarely reported, and can be mistaken for a spinal epidural abscess.1 A recent study suggests the frequency of axial involvement may be as high as 14% in patients with clinical or crystal-proven gout.2

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