

Glossopharyngeal Neuralgia

Michael Horowitz, MD
Pittsburgh, PA

Glossopharyngeal Neuralgia (GLN)

- GLN is a pain condition in which an individual has severe lancinating pain in the throat especially laterally and at the base of the tongue which is most often triggered by swallowing food or drinking liquids

Differential Diagnosis

- GLN
- Neoplasm
- Tonsillar abscess
- Eagle's Syndrome
 - Dull pharyngeal pain
 - Described by Eagle in 1937
 - Diagnosis is confirmed by radiological findings.
 - Palpation of the styloid process in the tonsillar fossa and infiltration with anesthetic are also used for making a diagnosis.

Evaluation

- History and neurologic examination
- Throat examination by Otolaryngologist
- Brain MRI
- Skull base CT to evaluate styloid process
- Evaluate vocal cord function to be sure that the vocal cord contralateral to the surgical side is functioning properly.

Treatment

- Microvascular decompression of
 - Glossopharyngeal nerve (CN 9)
 - Vagus nerve (CN 10)
 - Trigeminal nerve (CN 5)
- See **video** section of this web site to watch surgical procedure

Benefits and Risks

- Benefits
 - 85-95% incidence of pain relief
- Risks
 - Stroke (<3%)
 - Death (<1%)
 - Hearing loss/reduction (<3%)
 - Facial paralysis/weakness (<3%)
 - Double vision (<3%)
 - Difficulty swallowing (<10%)
 - Infection (<3%)
 - Spinal fluid leak (<5%)
 - Recurrence (10-20%)