



The Medical **Bulletin**

In Neurology

Pearls in peripheral neuropathy

Carpal tunnel syndrome is the commonest entrapment neuropathy. It is more common in women. Diabetes mellitus, pregnancy, rheumatoid arthritis, hypothyroidism and amyloid infiltration are possible predisposing factors. Patients present with pain or numbness involving the thumb, index and middle fingers. Sometimes patients may report diffuse brachialgia. Symptoms are usually worst in the night often awakening the patient. Neurological examination may be normal. Sensory loss over the median distribution and sometimes weakness of median innervated muscles importantly abductor pollicis brevis are sometimes noted. Nerve conduction studies and electromyography clinch the diagnosis.

Pearls in peripheral neuropathy

Carpal tunnel syndrome is associated with sensory loss in the median distribution. How do we clinically distinguish this from other neuropathies involving the median nerve? The skin over the thenar eminence and proximal palm on the radial aspect of the hand are supplied by the palmar cutaneous branch of the median nerve. This branch leaves the median nerve proximal to the flexor retinaculum. Hence it is spared in patients with carpal tunnel syndrome. Thus sensory loss in patients with carpal tunnel syndrome involves the distal thumb and index and middle fingers but not the thenar eminence.

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