Pathway for Acute Vertebral Compression Fracture (VCF)

1. Acute VCFs?

Key risk factors
- Post menopausal >55
- Known osteoporosis
- Low weight
- Steroid use
- Previous VCF
- Recent height loss >2cm
- Risk of myeloma

Clinical History & Examination

History
Sudden onset of acute back pain
Pain improves with lying down
Minimal / major trauma
Recent fall

Physical examination
Thoracic hyper-kyphosis
Percussion tenderness
Unable to lie supine on a bed

2. Presenting with Acute Radiculopathy or Myelopathy?

Order
X ray and Urgent MRI
Urgent Referral
To Imperial Spinal Clinic

Yes
No

Order
Standing / Sitting AP
And Lateral X-ray

3. VCF painful at the clinical level?

Order
Urgent MRI with STIR View
(if contraindicated
SPECT Scan)

Yes
No

If high level of pain persists
Consider alternative diagnosis
Order
MRI
Refer
To Imperial Spine Clinic

4. Acute Fracture Reported on MRI?

Yes
No

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Yes
No

5. High level of Pain / Disability?

High disability and/or pain score ≥4 (0-10)

Refer for surgical opinion
Kyphoplasty
Vertebroplasty
Open surgery

Low disability and/or pain score ≤4 (0-10)

All patients
DEXA scan to Ax OP
Add calcium & Vit D
Add Bisphosphonates
Dietary changes
Refer to falls clinic?

Non-surgical management
Pain management
Exercise
Physical therapy

www.Imperialspine.com
Fax: 0203 312 1471
Contacts for Acute Vertebral Compression Fracture (VCF) Service

Online Referrals:  www.Imperialspine.com

Postal referrals:  
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