WHAT IS A SPINAL ANGIOGRAM?

A SPINAL angiogram is where contrast (dye) is injected into the blood vessels (arteries) of the Thoracic / Abdominal Aorta and these (intercostal Branches) go to the spinal cord. This outlines them for the x-ray machine to take pictures.

WHAT ARE THE REASONS FOR HAVING AN ANGIOGRAM?

1. To look for abnormalities in the blood vessels e.g. vascular malformations
2. To find the main artery to the spinal cord.
3. As part of treatment of some conditions:
   - To embolise a tumour
   - To embolise Vascular Malformation
4. To check that a treatment for some conditions has been successful

WHO PERFORMS THE ANGIOGRAM?

A Radiologist
- specialist doctor trained in x-ray techniques

HOW IS IT PERFORMED?

The test is performed in an angiography suite with an x-ray machine. You will have fasted for 4 hours before this. A doctor, nurse and a radiographer are usually present. You lie down on the x-ray table. Access to the spinal blood vessels is obtained by feeding a fine catheter up from an artery in the groin to the Thoracic / Abdominal Aorta which is the main artery from the heart that goes to the bowel and legs.

The groin is anaesthetised with local anaesthetic by injection. Then a needle is pushed into the artery to gain access. A long fine catheter is then fed up the artery with the aid of a stiff wire in its middle.

Using x-rays and contrast to show the path the catheter is fed up to the Aorta. Each of the arteries going from the aorta that could be going to the spinal cord or a tumour / AVM that we are looking for are injected. The contrast is either injected by hand or by a machine. The injection may cause the side effects of nausea, warmth, dizziness or burning. Rarely it will cause irregular heartbeat. All of these things usually pass rapidly.

WHAT SHOULD YOU NOTIFY YOUR DOCTOR OF AFTER?

1. INCREASING LUMP IN GROIN
2. SUDDEN DIZZINESS OR CHEST PAINS
3. FEVER
4. SEIZURES
5. WEAKNESS
WHAT YOU NEED TO TELL THE DOCTOR

If you have had a reaction to Contrast(dye)
If you have kidney disease
If you are pregnant
If you have clotting problems
If you are taking blood thinning agents
  e.g. Warfarin/ aspirin/ anti-inflammatory

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

THE CHANCE OF ANY COMPLICATION IS VERY SMALL

THERE ARE RISKS AT EACH STEP OF THE PROCEDURE

THE COMMON RISKS ARE

Infection as the bloodstream is being entered.

Internal bleeding.

Hæmatoma or damage to the artery at the site of the puncture.

Irritation to the heart may cause an abnormal heartbeat.

Allergy to the contrast may cause a rash/swelling/difficulty breathing or heart problems.

In elderly patients or those with atheroma(plaque) in their arteries if a small piece is dislodged by the catheter then a stroke may occur (this is usually transient).

YOU WILL BE ASKED TO SIGN A CONSENT FORM TO SAY THAT YOU UNDERSTAND THE RISKS.
IF YOU ARE NOT SURE ASK BEFORE YOU SIGN.

Angiogram Picture showing filling of an Intercostal Artery

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