Problem/Issue
The patient has signs and symptoms of spinal cord compression

Goals
1. To identify potential problems at the earliest opportunity, maintain comfort and safety and manage associated problems as effectively as possible

Plan of Care
THIS CARE PLAN SHOULD BE USED IN CONJUNCTION WITH SPINAL CORD COMPRESSION GUIDELINES

1. Ensure that the patient remains on strict bed rest until spinal instability is ruled out. If spinal instability is suspected, nurse flat and log role when moving/turning.

2. Carry out a holistic nursing assessment but assess for specific signs and symptoms of spinal cord compression e.g. back pain, upper and lower motor deficits, sensory deficits and autonomic dysfunction

Pain:
3a. Observe for any pain and allow the patient to describe the nature of this pain (is it in one specific area, is it burning or shooting, does it feel like a pulling sensation, is it made worse by lying flat, coughing, sneezing or taking in a deep breath etc). Instigate Pain Care Plan (NCP 2.0)

3b. Give prescribed analgesia and observe effect. Seek advice from palliative care support team if indicated, once initial assessments and management has been initiated by the medical team. Also refer to ‘pain in spinal cord compression guidance’

3c. Continue strict bed rest, nurse flat, log roll and ensure careful positioning and handling to minimise further back pain, seek advice from physiotherapist

3d. If cervical lesion is responsible for the cord compression then refer to physiotherapist to fit cervical collar and give further advice to prevent movement of head.

Autonomic dysfunction: -
4a. Observe for signs of urinary hesitancy or retention or incontinence, encourage regular toileting and promote forced diuresis. If incontinent of urine, catheterise on doctors instructions and ensure catheter/skin care is carried out, adequate intake of oral fluids and monitor for infection. Instigate Urinary Catheter Care Plan (NCP 18.0) as applicable

4b. Observe the patient’s bowel habit daily; assessing for constipation, loss of urge to defecate or incontinence. Give prescribed laxatives, administer suppositories/enema if necessary, providing dignity, support and skin care as appropriate. (refer to bowel management guidelines)

Motor deficits (weakness, heaviness, stiffness, loss of coordination or paralysis in limbs) and Sensory deficits (numbness, paresthesia):-
5. Liaise with physiotherapists who will conduct assessment of motor function and sensory deficits; and will provide advice/instruction in respect of nursing management
CARE PLAN FOR THE PATIENT WITH SPINAL CORD COMPRESSION

6. Observe pressure areas daily and avoid injury to skin. Nurse the patient on a profiling bed & pressure relieving mattress **but not airflow**. Instigate Prevention & Management of Pressure Ulcers Care Plan (NCP 4.0)

7. Assist with personal hygiene ensuring spine stays in line, give effective analgesia prior to activity if required. Maintain privacy, dignity and (as far as possible) independence. Instigate Assistance with Personal & Oral Hygiene Care Plan (NCP 8.0)

8. Observe for signs of chest infection (increased respirations, pyrexia, cough, sputum) and report.

9. Observe for any signs of DVT due to immobility. (refer to **thromboprophylaxis protocol**)

10. Assess the patient’s psychological state, listen, support, explain and reassure as appropriate. If required refer for psychological assessment by trained personnel.

**Bed-End Documentation Required**
- Nursing Care Plan & Evaluation
- Prevention & Management of Pressure Ulcers Care Plan (NCP 4.0)
- Assistance with Personal & Oral Hygiene Care Plan (NCP 8.0)
- MEWS chart
- Urinary Catheter Care Plan (NCP 18.0) as applicable
- Pain Care Plan (NCP 2.0) as applicable
- Altered Bowel Function Care Plan (NCP 16.0) as applicable

**References/Evidence Base**
   - pain management


5. NICE (2008) Metastatic spinal cord compression: clinical guideline 75
CONSULTATION, APPROVAL & RATIFICATION PROCESS

All documents must be involved in a consultation process either locally within a department or division or throughout the trust at relevant board/committee meetings before being submitted for approval.

VERSION CONTROL SHEET

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*For more information and protocols on management of MSCC see: http://www.christie.nhs.uk/MSCC

**Procedure Reference:**

**Version:** V3

**Document Owner:** Dr V. Misra

**Accountable Committee:** Acute Oncology Group Network MSCC Group

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**Target audience:** All Clinicians