TABLE 456-1 TREATABLE SPINAL CORD DISORDERS

Compressive
Epidural, intradural, or intramedullary neoplasm
Epidural abscess
Epidural hemorrhage
Cervical spondylosis
Herniated disk
Posttraumatic compression by fractured or displaced vertebra or hemorrhage
Vascular
Arteriovenous malformation and dural fistula
Antiphospholipid syndrome and other hypercoagulable states
Inflammatory
Multiple sclerosis
Neuromyelitis optica
Transverse myelitis
Sarcoidosis
Sjögren-related myelopathy
Systemic lupus erythematosus-related myelopathy
Vasculitis
Infectious
Viral: VZV, HSV-1 and -2, CMV, HIV, HTLV-1, others
Bacterial and mycobacterial: *Borrelia*, *Listeria*, syphilis, others
Mycoplasma pneumoniae
Parasitic: schistosomiasis, toxoplasmosis
Developmental
Syringomyelia
Meningomyelocele
Tethered cord syndrome
Metabolic
Vitamin B_{12} deficiency (subacute combined degeneration)
Copper deficiency

Abbreviations: CMV, cytomegalovirus; HSV, herpes simplex virus; HTLV, human T cell lymphotropic virus; VZV, varicella-zoster virus.

embryologic development, growth of the cord lags behind that of the vertebral column, and the mature spinal cord ends at approximately the first lumbar vertebral body. The lower spinal nerves take an increasingly downward course to exit via intervertebral foramina. The first seven pairs of cervical spinal nerves exit above the same-numbered vertebral bodies, whereas all the subsequent nerves exit below the same-numbered vertebral bodies because of the presence of eight cervical spinal cord segments but only seven cervical vertebrae. The relationship between spinal cord segments and the corresponding vertebral bodies is shown in Table 456-2. These relationships assume particular importance for localization of lesions that cause spinal cord compression. Sensory loss below the circumferential level of the umbilicus, for example, corresponds to the T10 cord segment but indicates involvement of the cord adjacent to the seventh or eighth thoracic vertebral body (see Figs. 31-2 and 31-3). In addition, at every level, the main ascending and descending tracts are somatotopically organized with a laminated distribution that reflects the origin or destination of nerve fibers.

TABLE 456-2 SPINAL CORD LEVELS RELATIVE TO THE VERTEBRAL BODIES

Spinal Cord Level	Corresponding Vertebral Body
Upper cervical	Same as cord level
Lower cervical	1 level higher
Upper thoracic	2 levels higher
Lower thoracic	2 to 3 levels higher
Lumbar	T10-T12
Sacral	T12-L1

Determining the Level of the Lesion The presence of a horizontally defined level below which sensory, motor, and autonomic function is impaired is a hallmark of a lesion of the spinal cord. This *sensory level* is sought by asking the patient to identify a pinprick or cold stimulus applied to the proximal legs and lower trunk and successively moved up toward the neck on each side. Sensory loss below this level is the result of damage to the spinothalamic tract on the opposite side, one to two segments higher in the case of a unilateral spinal cord lesion, and at the level of a bilateral lesion. The discrepancy in the level of a unilateral lesion is the result of the course of the second-order sensory fibers, which originate in the dorsal horn, and ascend for one or two levels as they cross anterior to the central canal to join the opposite spinothalamic tract. Lesions that transect the descending corticospinal and other motor tracts cause paraplegia or quadriplegia with heightened deep tendon reflexes, Babinski signs, and eventual spasticity (the upper motor neuron syndrome). Transverse damage to the cord also produces autonomic disturbances consisting of absent sweating below the implicated cord level and bladder, bowel, and sexual dysfunction.

The uppermost level of a spinal cord lesion can also be localized by attention to the *segmental signs* corresponding to disturbed motor or sensory innervation by an individual cord segment. A band of altered sensation (hyperalgesia or hyperpathia) at the upper end of the sensory disturbance, fasciculations or atrophy in muscles innervated by one or several segments, or a muted or absent deep tendon reflex may be noted at this level. These signs also can occur with focal root or peripheral nerve disorders; thus, they are most useful when they occur together with signs of long tract damage. With severe and acute transverse lesions, the limbs initially may be flaccid rather than spastic. This state of "spinal shock" lasts for several days, rarely for weeks, and may be mistaken for extensive damage to the anterior horn cells over many segments of the cord or for an acute polyneuropathy.

The main features of transverse damage at each level of the spinal cord are summarized below.

CERVICAL CORD Upper cervical cord lesions produce quadriplegia and weakness of the diaphragm. The uppermost level of weakness and reflex loss with lesions at C5-C6 is in the biceps; at C7, in finger and wrist extensors and triceps; and at C8, finger and wrist flexion. Horner's syndrome (miosis, ptosis, and facial hypohidrosis) may accompany a cervical cord lesion at any level.

THORACIC CORD Lesions here are localized by the sensory level on the trunk and, if present, by the site of midline back pain. Useful markers of the sensory level on the trunk are the nipples (T4) and umbilicus (T10). Leg weakness and disturbances of bladder and bowel function accompany the paralysis. Lesions at T9-T10 paralyze the lower—but not the upper—abdominal muscles, resulting in upward movement of the umbilicus when the abdominal wall contracts (*Beevor's sign*).

LUMBAR CORD Lesions at the L2-L4 spinal cord levels paralyze flexion and adduction of the thigh, weaken leg extension at the knee, and abolish the patellar reflex. Lesions at L5-S1 paralyze only movements of the foot and ankle, flexion at the knee, and extension of the thigh, and abolish the ankle jerks (S1).

SACRAL CORD/CONUS MEDULLARIS The conus medullaris is the tapered caudal termination of the spinal cord, comprising the sacral and single coccygeal segments. The distinctive conus syndrome consists of bilateral saddle anesthesia (S3-S5), prominent bladder and bowel dysfunction (urinary retention and incontinence with lax anal tone), and impotence. The bulbocavernosus (S2-S4) and anal (S4-S5) reflexes are absent (Chap. 437). Muscle strength is largely preserved. By contrast, lesions of the cauda equina, the nerve roots derived from the lower cord, are characterized by low back and radicular pain, asymmetric leg weakness and sensory loss, variable areflexia in the lower extremities, and relative sparing of bowel and bladder function. Mass lesions in the lower spinal