

Facet Arthropathy

TERMINOLOGY

- Facet arthrosis
- Facet arthritis
- Degenerative facet disease
- Degenerative joint disease
- Spinal joint arthropathy.

INTRODUCTION

Facet arthropathy is defined as osteoarthritis of the synovially lined apophyseal spinal (facet) joint. Facet disease (â€œspine joint diseaseâ€?) is a common cause for chronic back pain with a prevalence ranging from 8-75%. It is felt by some to represent the most common source of chronic back pain. The mechanism contributing to pain is complex involving the presence of chemicals which induce and promote inflammation (inflammatory mediators). It is also caused by facet nerve irritation and the presence of chemicals such as substance P which facilitate pain. These factors can be triggered by many stimuli including recurrent microtrauma, an inflammatory process, osteoarthritis, as well as distension and inflammation of the spinal joint lining. Facet arthropathy may be associated with the development of a facet (synovial) cyst and degenerative disc disease.

PREVALENCE

- Facet joint degeneration often begins within the first two decades
- It is present to a variable degree in most adults at some level of the spine
- Almost all individuals over 60 years of age will have facet arthropathy
- In part associated with aging