**Neck – Red Flags**

Be aware of signs and symptoms that may indicate a more serious pathology in people with neck pain, such as:

General Signs and Symptoms

•Fever.

•Generalised neck stiffness.

•Pain that is increasing, is unremitting, or

disturbs sleep.!

•Severe neck tenderness.

•Skin erythema, wounds or exudate.

•Unexplained weight loss.

•New symptoms before the age of 20!years or

after the age of 55!years

Past Medical History Red Flags

•A history of inﬂammatory arthritis, cancer, tuberculosis,

immunosuppression, drug abuse, AIDS, or other infections.

•A history of violent trauma (for example, a road trafﬁc

accident) or a fall from a height or minor trauma in a person

at risk of osteoporosis (especially in post–menopausal

women).

•Minor trauma may fracture the spine in people with

osteoporosis.

•Risk factors for osteoporosis.

•A history of neck surgery.

Malignancy, infection, or inflammation

* Fever, night sweats, unexplained weight loss.
* Excruciating pain, intractable night pain, pain that is increasing, exquisite tenderness over vertebral body, generalised neck stiffness.
* Pain and stiffness that is worse in the morning.
* Cervical lymphadenopathy (swollen lymph nodes)
* Nausea or vomiting.
* New or severe headache.
* Photophobia or phonophobia (finding light too bright)
* Visual loss.
* Skin erythema, wounds or exudate.

Cervical myelopathy

* Paresis.
* Sensory changes or loss of sensation.
* Altered muscle tone.
* Clumsy or weak hands.
* Gait disturbance
* Clonus
* spasticity.
* Lhermitte's sign: flexion of the neck causes an electric shock-type sensation that radiates down the spine and into the limbs.
* More severe symptoms may include profound weakness of the hands, bowel or bladder dysfunction, and severe gait ataxia. Rarely there is loss of proximal (upper arm) muscle strength in the arms or legs.

A history or features of vascular disease

* blackouts
* dizziness
* pulsatile mass in the neck
* changes to speech
* Swallowing difficulties
* Nausea/vomiting
* Visual disturbance
* Blurred vision
* Double vision
* Balance problems
* Limb weakness
* Vertigo

Neurological problems, such as:

•Altered cognitive status, new confusion

•Altered muscle tone, clonus, spasticity.

•Ataxia - problems balancing ad walking, speaking, swallowing, wirting, eating, visual changes

•Loss of coordination: gait disturbance, clumsy or weak hands,

•Loss of sexual, bladder, or bowel function.

•New or severe headache.

•Photophobia (or phonophobia

•Visual loss.

•Weakness involving more than one myotome

•Loss of sensation involving more than one dermatome

Other red flag features include:

* A history of immunosuppression, tuberculosis, or intravenous drug abuse (consider spinal abscess, discitis, or osteomyelitis).
* A history of violent trauma (for example, a road traffic accident) or a fall from a height or minor trauma in a person at risk of osteoporosis,
* Risk factors for osteoporosis such as using steroids, post–menopausal women (especially the elderly)
* A history of neck surgery.
* A history of inflammatory arthritis.
* A history of cancer