

Clinical Image

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Laryngeal fracture after sneezing

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Description

A healthy 61-year-old man sought emergency care after experiencing neck swelling (Figure 1), throat discomfort, and hoarseness, which developed gradually over two days following a forceful and blocked sneeze. He reported a painful sensation of rupture in his anterior neck. Neck palpation revealed subcutaneous emphysema and clicking sounds over the larynx. Flexible laryngoscopy showed left vocal fold hematoma. CT scan demonstrated a displaced vertical thyroid cartilage fracture (Figure 2), soft tissue emphysema (Figure 2), and pneumomediastinum. Direct laryngoscopy revealed no mucosal defect. An anterior neck approach was performed to repair the midline thyroid cartilage fracture (Figures 3 and 4). The patient rapidly experienced relief from pain. A two-week follow-up showed complete resolution of signs and symptoms. Closed-airway sneezing transmitting high Valsalva pressure is a dangerous manoeuvre and should be avoided, as it may lead to various other intrinsic traumas such as pneumothorax, orbital blow-out frac-

ture, diffuse pneumocephalus, cerebrospinal fluid leak, round window fistula and sensorineural hearing loss, myocardial infarction and aortic dissection.

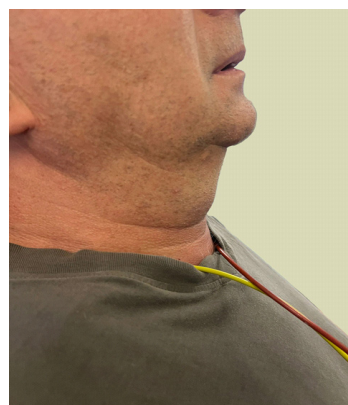


Figure 1: Clinical image of anterior neck swelling.

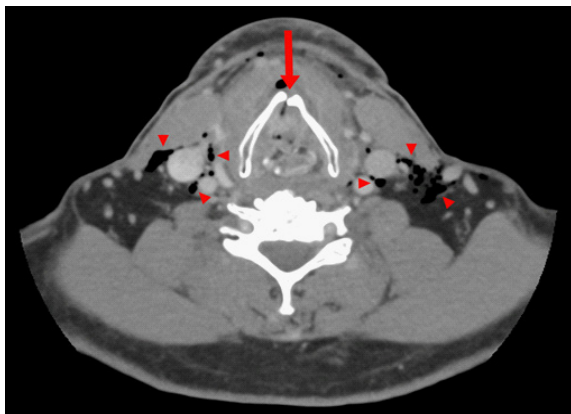


Figure 2: Neck CT scan showing displaced thyroid cartilage fracture (arrow) and soft tissue emphysema (arrowheads).

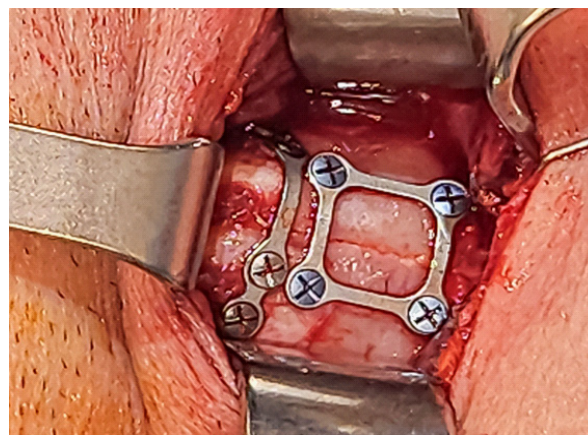


Figure 4: Intraoperative image showing thyroid cartilage fracture after reduction and fixation with two plates.

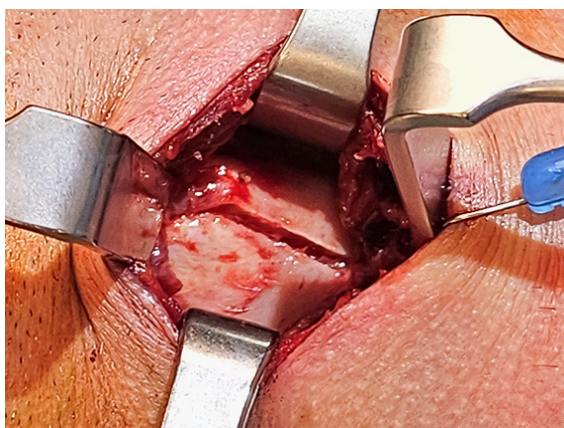


Figure 3: Intraoperative image showing the vertical fracture line of the thyroid cartilage.