

## Clinical case – Thoracic Spine Pain

Alexis is an 18-year-old high school senior currently preparing for his European Judo Championship qualification, a major event in his season. He trains five times a week at his local dojo, in addition to two weekly strength training sessions. His schedule is especially intense as he is also studying for the final baccalaureate exams in two months.

For the past five weeks, Alexis has been complaining of pain in the mid-thoracic region, specifically around T6-T8 on the left side, which he describes as a constant ache rated 3 to 4/10, increasing to 7/10 during randori practice or explosive movements (twisting, throws, falls). He can localize the pain precisely and describes it as a "deep side stitch," occasionally accompanied by mild shortness of breath at the end of inspiration. The pain started after an intense training session during which he fell hard on his back after a poorly controlled throw. He didn't feel pain immediately but began noticing discomfort in the days that followed. The pain worsens after long periods of sitting (e.g., studying or car rides) and is more noticeable in the evenings. He sleeps on his right side to relieve the tension on the left. Alexis has no significant medical history apart from a mild thoracic scoliosis diagnosed during adolescence. He has not taken any breaks from training, fearing he might miss his chance to qualify. To avoid pain, he has been limiting certain movements, especially throws to the left, and compensates with an asymmetrical training load. He admits feeling a lot of pressure lately, juggling sport and academic demands along with the expectations of his coach and parents. He struggles with sleep, often feeling tense, "like his whole back is locked up." He has already consulted an osteopath several times, who mentioned a "rib fixation," but the pain persists. He fears this issue might jeopardize his participation in the upcoming championship. His general practitioner diagnosed him with non-specific thoracic musculoskeletal pain, with no red flags, and referred him to physiotherapy. During the first session, Alexis confides: "I really want to get better fast, but I feel like my body is giving up. I can't stop now, not this close to the goal."

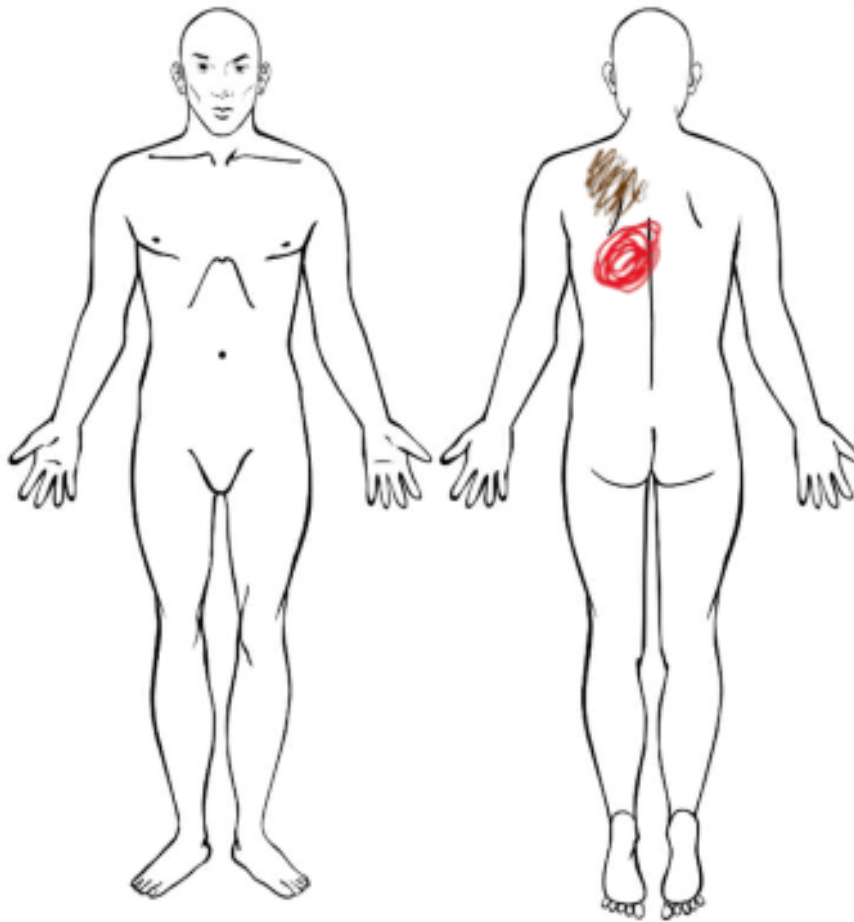
Alexis sets the following goals:


- Participate in the European Judo Championship without limiting pain
- Recover quality sleep
- Better manage the stress related to his academic and athletic commitments


His father, very involved in his athletic career, accompanies him to the first appointment and hopes that physiotherapy will help him "hold on until the end of the year."

You ask him to fill out a body chart and the following questionnaires:


- Visual Analogue Scale (VAS): average pain 4/10, peaks at 7/10
- Modified STarT Back Screening Tool: 5/9
- Tampa Scale for Kinesiophobia (TSK): 45/68



 Douleur aigue, coup de poignard, pincement, élancement, tiraillement

 Sensation de chaud ou de froid

 Engourdissement, anesthésie, perte de sensation

 Douleur profonde, difficile à localiser précisément, sourde, floue

 Sensation de fourmillement ou de piqûre d'aiguille

 Sensation de raideur, de fatigue, autre

### Tampa Scale for Kinesiophobia (Miller , Kori and Todd 1991)

- 1 = strongly disagree  
 2 = disagree  
 3 = agree  
 4 = strongly agree

1. I'm afraid that I might injury myself if I exercise	1	2	3	4
2. If I were to try to overcome it, my pain would increase	1	2	3	4
3. My body is telling me I have something dangerously wrong	1	2	3	4
4. My pain would probably be relieved if I were to exercise	1	2	3	4
5. People aren't taking my medical condition seriously enough	1	2	3	4
6. My accident has put my body at risk for the rest of my life	1	2	3	4
7. Pain always means I have injured my body	1	2	3	4
8. Just because something aggravates my pain does not mean it is dangerous	1	2	3	4
9. I am afraid that I might injure myself accidentally	1	2	3	4
10. Simply being careful that I do not make any unnecessary movements is the safest thing I can do to prevent my pain from worsening	1	2	3	4
11. I wouldn't have this much pain if there weren't something potentially dangerous going on in my body	1	2	3	4
12. Although my condition is painful, I would be better off if I were physically active	1	2	3	4
13. Pain lets me know when to stop exercising so that I don't injure myself	1	2	3	4
14. It's really not safe for a person with a condition like mine to be physically active	1	2	3	4
15. I can't do all the things normal people do because it's too easy for me to get injured	1	2	3	4
16. Even though something is causing me a lot of pain, I don't think it's actually dangerous	1	2	3	4
17. No one should have to exercise when he/she is in pain	1	2	3	4

Thinking about the **last 2 weeks** tick your response to the following questions:

	Disagree 0	Agree 1
1 My back pain has <b>spread down my leg(s)</b> at some time in the last 2 weeks	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2 I have had pain in the <b>shoulder</b> or <b>neck</b> at some time in the last 2 weeks	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
3 I have only <b>walked short distances</b> because of my back pain	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4 In the last 2 weeks, I have <b>dressed more slowly</b> than usual because of back pain	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
5 It's not really safe for a person with a condition like mine to be physically active	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6 <b>Worrying thoughts</b> have been going through my mind a lot of the time	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
7 I feel that <b>my back pain is terrible</b> and <b>it's never going to get any better</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8 In general I have <b>not enjoyed</b> all the things I used to enjoy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

9. Overall, how **bothersome** has your back pain been in the **last 2 weeks**?

Not at all	Slightly	Moderately	Very much	Extremely
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
0	0	0	1	1

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