LETTER TO THE EDITOR

A rupture of the serratus anterior

Sir

Traumatic winging of the scapula from a rupture of the serratus anterior muscle is listed as a cause of winging (Fiddian & King, 1984) but has only been reported in the literature by Fitchet in 1930.

We have recently seen a case which was clinically a rupture of the serratus anterior.

A 22-year-old man was driving his car under a bridge being cleaned by 'sand blasting'. The passenger side of the car was sand blasted as well, causing him to brake suddenly, bracing his hands against the steering wheel, with arms fully extended.

When he was seen in the Accident and Emergency Department, he had pain and tenderness along the vertebral border of the scapula. There was winging of the scapula at rest which was accentuated by resisted extension of the arms. Clinically there was a haematoma within the serratus anterior muscle and reduced power of the muscle, suggesting a partial rupture. Radiographs were normal and the patient had a full range of movement of the shoulder. The lesion completely resolved within six weeks with physiotherapy.

Winging of the scapula has a variety of causes and a variable prognosis. Recovery from neuronal injuries can be expected up to nine months later (Gozna & Harris, 1979). Muscular injury is much less common but seems to carry a better prognosis.

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