What is DCM?

Degenerative Cervical Myelopathy (DCM) is caused by deterioration in the cervical spine leading to compression of the spinal cord.

Up to 5% of over 50 year olds are at risk of developing DCM!

SYMPTOMS

DCM is a common, progressive neurological disease resulting from wear and tear arthritis of the neck. Arthritic symptoms include neck stiffness and pain. At early stages, DCM often affects the hands, causing numbness and clumsiness, and presents with imbalance, which can affect walking. Compression of spinal nerves can cause numbness and pain running into the arms and associated weakness. Bladder function is often compromised. In most cases DCM is progressive and can lead to paralysis.

INVESTIGATIONS

MRI (Magnetic Resonance Imaging) is the mainstay of diagnosis. It is a type of body scan, which uses magnets to image inside the body. It is able to provide excellent pictures of the spinal cord, ligaments and bones.

TREATMENT

Surgery is a major undertaking, but surgery is the only treatment option at the moment for the management of DCM. The risks and benefits of surgery must be weighed against the risk and benefits of doing nothing.