

Future perspectives

The clinical entity of ACNES is now well established and dedicated centers have extensive experience with its treatment. It would be interesting to examine all novel patients 'instrumentally' with modalities such as quantitative sensory testing, parietal wall electromyography, cutaneous evoked somatosensory potentials, thermography or even cutaneous biopsy, hopefully providing a clue on the different pathophysiological mechanisms of the syndrome. In order to do this, robust study designs with sufficient power are needed. A pilot regarding quantitative sensory testing is currently being expanded.²⁵⁻²⁷

Long term results and data on recurrences after treatment are also important topics that have been addressed by reviewers. A previous study showed favorable 1-year follow-up after an anterior neurectomy, but 5 and 10 year effect rates are unknown.²⁶ A retrospective analysis on recurrences after anterior neurectomy is currently being performed. The clinical relevance of outcome measures within pain medicine is righteously so under critical review: what does 50% pain reduction mean when in some patients 100% pain remission is achieved?²⁹

Regarding spinal cord stimulation, future perspectives are abundant. DRG SCS is a paresthesia free stimulation bearing a new paradigm on the method of action of spinal cord stimulation.³⁰ Conventional SCS was believed to owe its effects to interference with the ascending pain signal.³¹ In other studies concerning different pain syndromes, some patients seem to have a distinct preference for paresthesia-based stimulation.³² It would be interesting to compare conventional SCS to DRG SCS in ACNES and CIPIP patients. Finally, science is the search for consensus rather than finding absolute truths. This thesis can therefore also be seen as an invitation to other centers to investigate ACNES within their academic scope and background. Recent studies involving the role of pulsed radio frequency treatment in ACNES show a potential important role of pain specialists in the treatment algorithm.³⁴ Patients will undoubtedly benefit from this evolving, multidisciplinary approach.