Spinal cord schwannoma after vertebral trauma: a causal relation?

Four years after a road traffic accident that resulted in a "chance" fracture of the first lumbar vertebra, a 21 year old man presented with increasing low back pain radiating down the right leg to the heel. Examination showed depressed right knee and ankle reflexes only. Magnetic resonance imaging of the thoracolumbar junction (figure) demonstrated an ovoid lobulated tumour (A) lying posterior to the T12/L1 intervertebral space to the right of the midline and causing spinal cord compression. Inferior to the tumour was a cyst of the conus medullaris (B). The tumour was excised and subsequent histology showed it to be a schwannoma of the Antoni A type. C shows residual deformity at the healed "chance" fracture of the L1 vertebra.

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