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Superior vena cava syndrome: An oncologic complication

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Objectives:

To review the clinical presentation, pathophysiology, diagnosis, treatment, and nursing care of superior vena cava syndrome (SVCS).

Data sources:

Journal articles, research studies, and book chapters relating to complications of lung cancer and SVCS.

Conclusion:

Lung cancer is the most common malignancy associated with SVCS. The onset of symptoms may be gradual or rapid. Treatment of SVCS is based on the etiology and histologic diagnosis.

Implications for nursing practice:

Major considerations in the nursing care of patients with SVCS include recognition of

high-risk patients, facilitation and coordination of diagnostic procedures, assessment of respiratory, cardiac and neurologic systems, administration of therapy, provision of emotional and psychosocial support, and patient education.



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