Diagnosis

The paths people take to a Chiari diagnosis are as numerous and varied as its many symptoms. There is no single objective test to diagnose symptomatic Chiari.

Diagnostic Process

- **Most common tests:**
  - **Neurological Exam:** a way to explore what is happening to the nervous system by examining how different parts of the body respond to different forms of stimulus and functional tasks.
  - **MRI:** Magnetic Resonance Imaging, creates an image of the brain and spine.
  - **Cine-MRI:** also known as phase-contrast MRI, creates an image of the flow of spinal fluid.

- **Other tests:**
  - **X-Rays**
  - **CT Scans**
  - **Hearing Vision**
  - **Upright MRI**
  - **Vestibular**
  - **Urodynamic**
  - **Neuropsychological**

The average adult waits 30 months for a Chiari diagnosis.

Missed Diagnoses - Misdiagnoses

Missed Diagnoses occur when physicians ascribe initial symptoms to stress or other factors. Unfortunately, some patients are told their symptoms are psychological in nature. In other cases, patients are told that Chiari is not the cause of their symptoms or that Chiari is nothing to worry about and they were just born that way.

Misdiagnoses occur when the many possible symptoms of Chiari are associated with other conditions, such as: MS, Fibromyalgia, Chronic Fatigue, Lupus, Migraines, Carpal Tunnel Syndrome and ALS (Lou Gehrig’s). These associations cause confusion to the medical situation and can result in critical delays in getting proper treatment.

Pediatric Diagnosis

Children cannot always verbalize what they are feeling, sometimes the first clue is lack of proper development, either physically or cognitively. Some children will bang their heads when they can’t verbalize that their head hurts. Symptoms may result in changes in behavior and attitude. MRIs require the patient to remain still for an extended period of time which is not easy for a young child. Young children may need to be anesthetized. In older children, unusual presentations of scoliosis are a strong indication that an MRI should be performed.

Set of Symptoms

- Headache, Dizziness
- Weakness in arms/hands
- Numbness in arms/hands
- Leg Weakness
- Fatigue, Tinnitus

Conditions with similar symptoms

- Multiple Sclerosis
- Fibromyalgia, Chronic Fatigue
- Lupus, Migraines, Carpal Tunnel
- ALS (Lou Gehrig’s)