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Identification of a new site for caudal epidural anaesthesia in elephants

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It is reported that the site used for cattle epidural anaesthesia is also used in elephants for therapeutic purposes. Fifteen elephant skeletons were carefully examined and studied to identify a more suitable site for epidural anaesthesia in elephants.

The position between the last lumbar and first sacral vertebrae was identified as a place which is more palpable and viewed externally with a high accessibility. This site was used successfully on an elephant of the Maharagama Temple for administering treatment for haemorrhoids following rectal examination with the use of a transparent speculum (diameter: 100 mm, length: 620 mm). 2% lignocaine hydrochloride (30 ml) was injected using an epidural spinal needle (90 mm, 18 G) through the identified site to induce anaesthesia. By this method, the elephant was anaesthetized in 10 – 12 minutes. The duration of anaesthesia was approximately 1 hour. It is found that this site for epidural anaesthesia could be used effectively for minor medical and surgical conditions of an elephant without using general anaesthesia.

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