Clinical Pearl: Hoffmann's Sign

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Technique:	Hoffmann's sign is a quick test to screen for cervical central canal stenosis and/or cervical myelopathy. A positive test indicates a possible upper motor neuron lesion from spinal cord compression.
Indication:	Signs and symptoms suggestive of cervical myelopathy, such as: significant cervical spine injury (MVA), clumsiness of the hands, exaggerated deep tendon reflexes (arms or legs), ankle clonus, poorly coordinated gait, pain or paresthesias in the extremities, or weakness in upper/lower extremities.
Positioning:	The patient's hand and fingers are relaxed with the wrist slightly extended. The therapist stabilizes the middle phalange of the middle finger (see Figure 1).
Instruction:	The therapist quickly flicks the patient's distal phalange (middle finger) downward into flexion of the distal interphalangeal joint. A positive test is noted by flexion of the interphalangeal joint of the thumb and flexion of the index finger (see Figure 2).
Modification:	This technique can also be performed on the index finger with a positive test noted as flexion of the interphalangeal joint of the thumb.
Note:	Be mindful when interpreting bilateral hyperreflexia in patients who have anxiety and/or depression and take a selective serotonin reuptake inhibitor (SSRI) such as Celexa, Lexapro, Paxil, Prozac, or Zoloft – their reflexes may be elevated due to these medications.