Cervical Facet Pain Pattern

- The cervical facet joints are the joints of the neck.
- Neurophysiologic studies have shown that cervical facet-joint capsules are sources of neck pain.\(^1\)
- Dwyer et al.\(^2\) established pain patterns of the cervical facet joints.
  - Parasagittal cervical and cervicothoracic pain.
  - Do not/rarely cause midline cervical pain or arm pain.
  - Do not cross to the other side. Left facet joints do not cause right sided pain and vice versa.
  - Can be unilateral pain (from joints on one side of the spine) or bilateral (pain from both joints on both sides of the spine.)
- When pain is chronic or severe, the pain can extend beyond these pain patterns.
- Facet joints do not have to show degeneration on diagnostic imaging to be painful. This is usually due to a joint capsule sprain (synovitis).
- Facet joints that do show degeneration on diagnostic imaging can be either a joint capsule sprain (synovitis) or degeneration (arthrosis) or both.
- Consider that the patient may have more than one pain generator.
- Cervical facet joints limited cervical axial rotation and therefore rotation is often the most painful motion for patients with facet joint pain.\(^3\)