

AB119. SOH23ABS_047. Plain film abdomens, more harm than good?

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Background: A plain film abdomen (PFA) contributes minimally to clinical scenarios due to low sensitivity and specificity. The use of PFA exposes patients to unnecessary radiation and is a drain on hospital financial resources. We hypothesise that PFAs in the emergency department are over utilised to falsely reassure clinicians and patients alike.

Methods: A search of the National Integrated Medical Imaging System (NIMIS) database in University Hospital Waterford was conducted to identify all PFAs requested by the emergency department between 01/01/2022 and 31/07/2022. Requests for patients over 40 years of age or where was suspicion of foreign body ingestion were excluded. A retrospective search of the NIMIS database was used to identify if patients underwent further imaging post PFA.

Results: A total of 85 PFAs were deemed suitable for inclusion. These comprised of 35 male and 50 female subjects. Subjects had an average age of 29.3 years. A proportion of 75% of PFAs detected no abnormality. Faecal loading and dilated bowel loops were the only pathologies identified on plain film. None of the patients with pathology on PFA underwent subsequent radiological investigations. A proportion of 21% of subjects had computed tomography (CT) of their abdomen and pelvis and 14% had a formal

departmental ultrasound abdomen. None of the diagnoses made by CT or ultrasound were evident on PFA.

Conclusions: PFA requests are over utilised in the emergency department. PFAs contribute remarkably little to establishing a diagnosis. PFAs are an unnecessary financial burden and are a source of needless radiation exposure

Keywords: Abdomen; emergency; misdiagnosis; radiation; X-ray

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Footnote

Conflicts of Interest: The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.

Ethical Statement: The authors are accountable for all aspects of the work in ensuring that questions related to the accuracy or integrity of any part of the work are appropriately investigated and resolved.

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