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ABC Air Way ,Breathing ,CT ;
Are we over using CTs in managing abdominal pain?

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Introduction: With the increased availability of CT ,many believe that we are over using CT as a diagnostic modality neglecting our clinical judgment and depriving the new generation of surgeons from ever obtaining the ability of making diagnosis without the help of CT. On the other hand, we practice in a different era why not use what is readily available to us?

Methodology :To evaluate this repeated point of contention we carried out a retrospective analysis in which we looked at all patients who presented to our hospital with abdominal pain in one month period. We aimed to investigate the number of CTs ordered and how many resulted in positive findings ,and how many of those findings had an impact on the management . We also looked at the years of experience of the surgeon on-call ,the age ,gender and background of the patient to sub analyse if that had any influence

Results : 309 patients referred to the surgical department with abdominal pain. Age range of 8-96 years old . With average age of 45 years old. 176 were females. 36 were paediatric. Over half of the adult patients (61%) received CTs.
24 of those CTs were reported normal (14%). 16 of those CTs lead to an emergency surgery (9%) similar number revealed abnormalities that was potentially diagnosable with an alternative modality of imaging (USS) like cholecystitis.
None of the paediatric patient received CTs. 3 revealed unrelated potential malignancies
It was noticed that patients presenting at night were more likely to get a CT . The age of the surgeon and years of experience surprisingly had no impact

Conclusion The data analysed suggest that we are increasingly using CT to guide making a diagnosis in abdominal pain presentation particularly during night time . In light of the improved technology in term of radiation dose perhaps the risk benefit ratio is justifiable . However we advise that a surgeon should not forfeit his/her clinical instincts.