Recurrent Severe Postpartum Abdominal Complications After Repeat Cesarean Delivery

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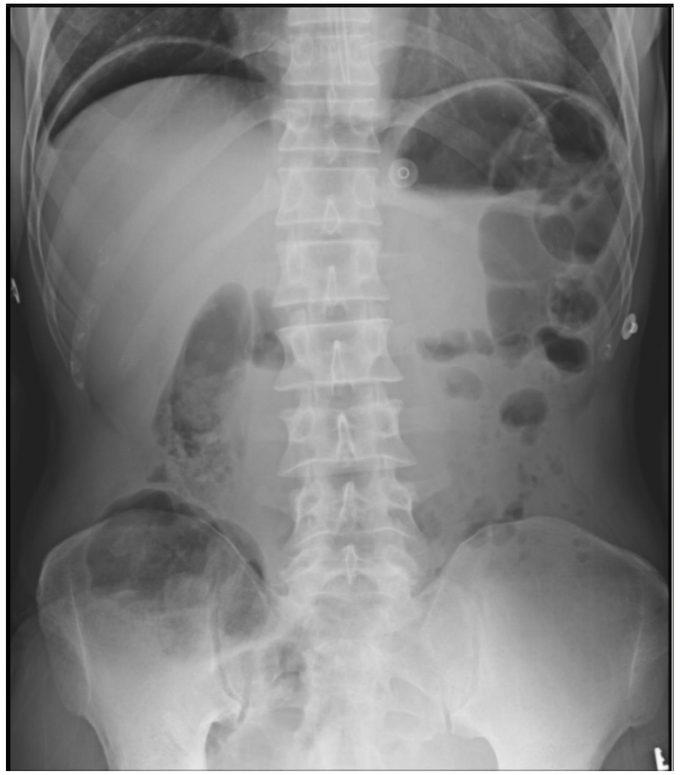
Background:

- Cesarean delivery is associated with **postoperative adhesions**
- Small bowel obstruction (SBO) after cesarean is **rare (~0.1%)**
- Severe complications such as **ischemia or bowel perforation are poorly characterized**
- Limited data on:
  - Patient-level **risk factors for SBO**
  - Predictors of **progression to perforation**
- Clinical challenge:
  - **Risk stratification is limited**
  - Complications often present **late and severe**



Kulkarni R, Bowel perforation - subdiaphragmatic free gas. Case study, Radiopaedia.org (Accessed on 03 Apr 2026) https://doi.org/10.53347/rID-21444

Case: 31-year-old G3P3003 at 39w0d undergoing repeat cesarean delivery

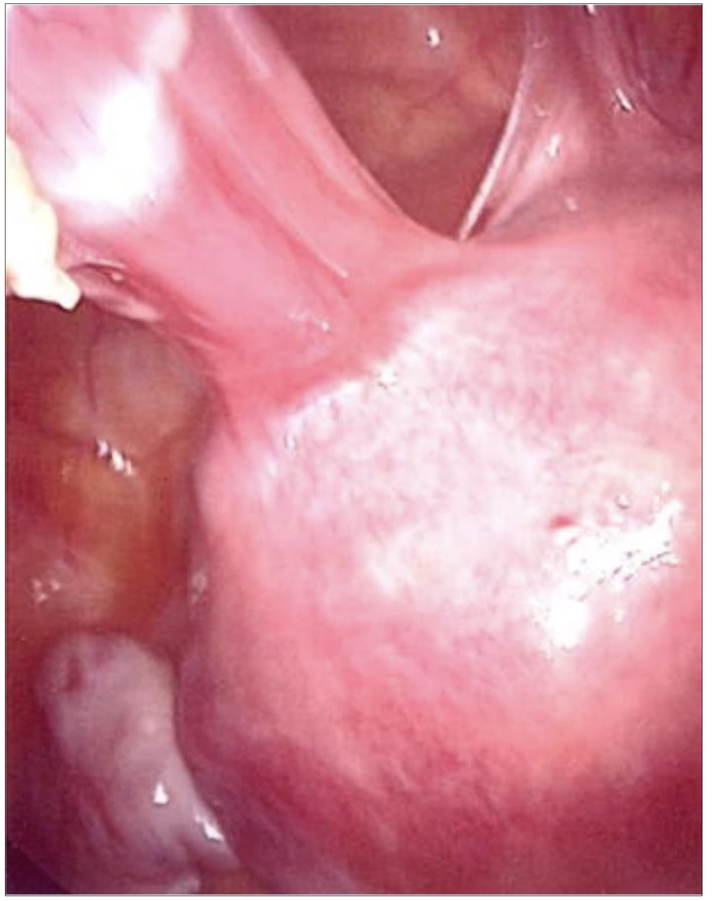
- History:
  - Two prior cesarean deliveries
  - Both complicated by **postoperative SBO requiring surgery**

- Intraoperative finding:
  - **Small bowel adhesion** to anterior abdominal wall

- **Postoperative day 1:**
  - Abdominal distension, tachycardia, worsening pain
  - Imaging: **free intraperitoneal air**

- **Emergent laparotomy:**
  - **Small bowel perforation** at adhesion site
  - Intact hysterotomy
  - Underwent bowel resection and washout

- Course:
  - ICU admission + acute kidney injury
  - Discharged **POD 8**



Tulandi et al., *Gynecol Surg*, 2011 (Fig. 3)

Teaching Points

- **No clinical guidelines exist for risk stratification of SBO or delayed perforation after cesarean delivery**
- **Limited risk stratification increases the likelihood of undetected clinical progression** to ischemia or perforation
- Cesarean-associated SBO may present with **advanced pathology**, requiring **early recognition and high postoperative vigilance**