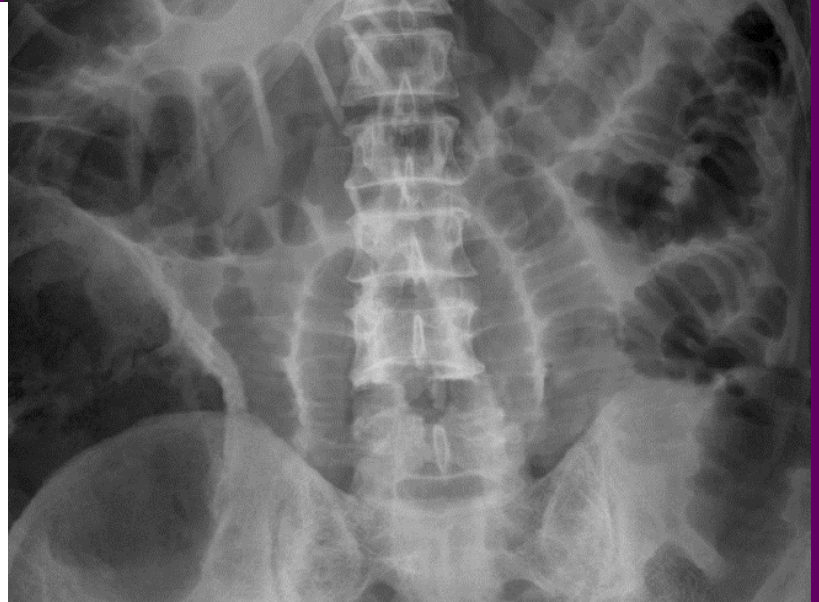


Safety Alert: Abdominal Pain



Abdominal pain in the ED is a significant cause of diagnostic uncertainty and error. Perforations, AAA, obstruction and ischaemic bowel all being missed and leading to patient death.

Elderly and diabetic patients often have vague, nonspecific symptoms and atypical presentations of potentially life-threatening conditions.

Older patients with abdominal pain have a 6-8 fold increase in mortality compared to younger patients. This group require more investigations and are more likely to require admission.

For patients with peritonitis (requiring urgent surgery), for every 1 hour delay in administration of antibiotics, there is a 10% increase in mortality. (NELA data)