Audit of Indications for Plain Abdominal Films from the Emergency Department

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BACKGROUND
In 2011, it was noted in a London DGH that many AXRs requested by the Emergency Department were not indicated according to RCR iRefer guidelines.

METHOD
This was a retrospective study of all AXRs requested by the Emergency Department over a 4 week period in November 2011. The indication of the AXR, the result of the film and whether further images were obtained, were noted. An intervention was put in place and a re-audit was completed in December 2014.

RESULTS 1ST ROUND
173 AXR were requested in 26 days (6.65 per day). Only 59% of X-rays in this audit had an appropriate indication. 76% were unremarkable and 24% showed abnormal findings. 40% of patients had further imaging.

1ST ACTION PLAN
The radiology department circulated educational posters throughout the hospital with examples of appropriate indications. Radiographers now discuss AXR requests if they are not indicated according to guidelines and seek advice from the duty radiologist.

RESULTS 2ND ROUND
The audit cycle was completed in December 2014. 54 AXR were requested in 18 days (3 per day). 100% of AXR requested were found to be appropriate. We also found a 55% reduction in number of films requested. As before, 75% were unremarkable and 42% of patients went on to have further imaging.

2ND ACTION PLAN
We continue to ensure posters are in circulation. Our plan is to re-audit in one year to ensure standards are maintained as junior doctors rotate through the hospital.

REFERENCES
¹The use of plain abdominal x rays in the emergency department¹, J E Smith and E J Hall, Emerg Med J 2009 26: 160-163
iRefer, Adult guidelines, Gastrointestinal system http://guidelines.irefer.org.uk/adult/#Tpc112