

ED QUICK QUIZ

WHAT IS THE DIAGNOSIS?

BACKGROUND

Paramedics bring a 77 year old man from a nursing home with abdominal pain. He has been resident there for about 4 months since he became unable to care for himself due to his dementia. The man is unable to give any coherent history due to severe dementia and the carer travelling with him does not know him very well as she is new to the job. He has a known history of diverticular disease, osteoarthritis and ischaemic heart disease.

On examination he appears pale thin and unkempt. HR is 110, RR 17/min and BP 167/94 and temperature is 38C.

He is in no obvious distress until his abdomen is palpated, which reveals left iliac fossa tenderness.

As you examine his back you notice a number of lesions similar to that pictured below:



CXR is normal and bloods show a mild inflammatory response. A diagnosis of diverticular disease is thought most likely and surgical admission is arranged.

QUESTIONS

1. What is the lesion pictured above, and what does it suggest?
2. What test can you use to determine if he can be classed as a vulnerable adult?
3. What action do you need to take?

ANSWERS & DISCUSSION

1. Lesion

This man was appropriately admitted for investigation and treatment of his abdominal pain. The lesions on his back were healing cigarette burns, presumed to have been inflicted by his “carers”.

Under the Adult Support and Protection Act which was enforced in 2008, you have a duty as his treating doctor to act to prevent him being subjected to further harm. This needs to be reported within 1 day of you being aware of the risk of harm.

Harm is defined as any physical, psychological, social, financial or emotional harm or neglect.

2. Test

The three point test can be used to determine whether someone fits the criteria to be classed as a vulnerable adult, and therefore fall under the auspices of the Adult Support and Protection Act and the protection it offers.

The three question test is:

- *Is the person unable to safeguard their own wellbeing, rights or interests?*
- *Are they at an increased risk of harm as a result?*
- *Because they are affected by disability, mental disorder, illness or physical or mental infirmity, are they more vulnerable to being harmed than adults who are not so affected?*

Need to satisfy all 3 parts to allow you to apply the act.

Therefore, the type of people you need to carefully consider for vulnerability and therefore increased risk of harm, are those that are unable or prevented from reporting their own circumstances and also dependent on others for their care. Also, be aware of any delays in patients being brought for treatment and any concerns raised through collateral histories from concerned relatives/others.

3. Action

This man should be referred to social work by the treating ED doctor who suspects the abuse regardless of whether admission is planned or not. This is done by printing off an AP1 form from Staffnet. Discuss the case with emergency social work and fax a copy of the form to the number provided. Involve police where a criminal act is suspected, and Datix all AP1 referrals so that a record is made of your involvement. Social services are obliged to investigate the complaint and may ask you to provide evidence to a vulnerable adult committee, which is set up in each individual case. Ensure you record information wholly and accurately.