

ED QUICK QUIZ

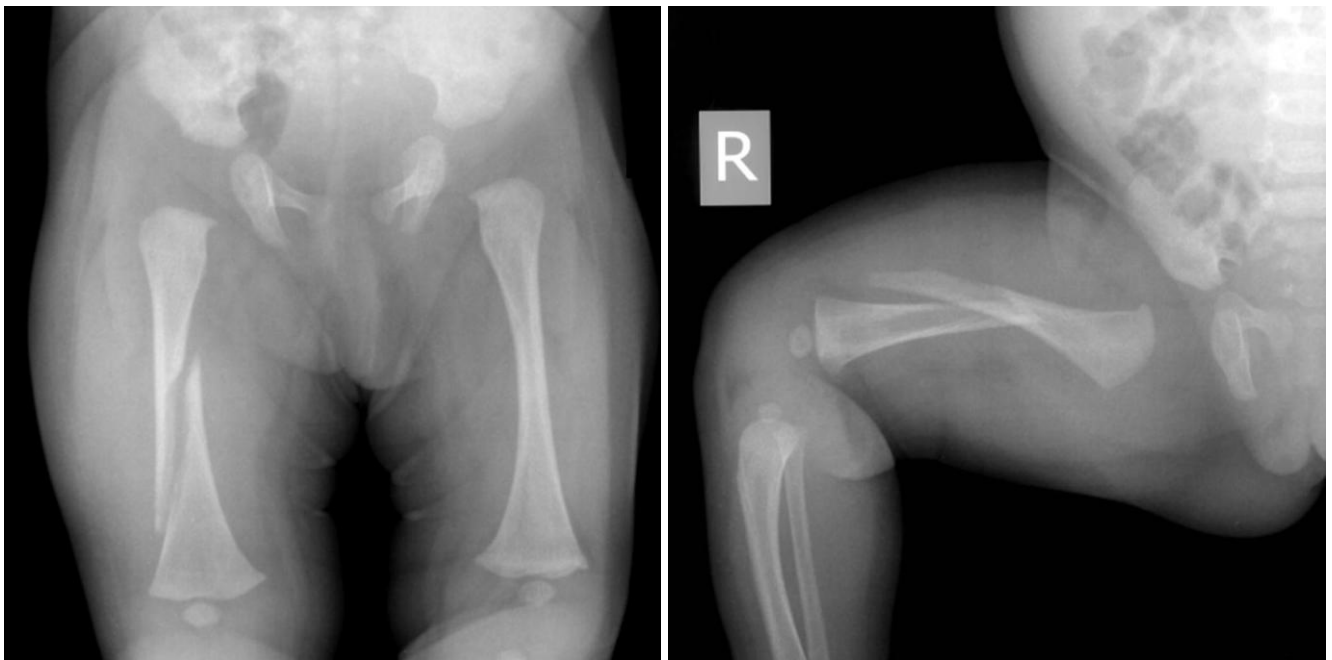
WHAT IS THE DIAGNOSIS?

BACKGROUND

A 6 week old boy is brought to hospital by his mother who found him with an injured leg. The father, who is not in attendance, was looking after the child at the time of the injury. The boy's leg was apparently twisted during a nappy change 6 hours ago. He is crying and inconsolable.

The boy has no past medical or family history, is on no medications and is up to date with immunisations.

When you examine his leg, there is an area of tenderness and swelling around the shaft of the right femur. You perform an x-ray which is as shown.



QUESTIONS

1. What concerns you other than the physical injury itself? Why?
2. Having discovered this injury, what other things should you look for/ask about?
3. What immediate measures would you take to ensure this child's safety?
4. You tell the mother you will have to inform social work. She becomes angry and demands that you do not. What do you do?
5. She leaves the department while you are on the phone. What do you do?
6. Is there anyone else you should be worried about?

ANSWERS & DISCUSSION

1. This injury is concerning for non-accidental injury:

- The boy is too young to walk therefore it is unlikely to be accidental.
- A degree of force inconsistent with the stated mechanism would be required.
- There has been an 6 hours delay in presentation of a clearly significant injury.

2. Other things to check:

- Check for other injuries – strip head to toe and look everywhere.
- Check records for previous concerns.
- Number of attendances at ED.
- Find out if the child is on the Child Protection Register.
- Find out who else had access to the child – grandparents, uncles, friends etc.

3. Immediate safety measures:

- The child is not safe to go home and will require a place of safety, especially if the father lives with him. Refer to the medical team at the Royal Children's Hospital.
- Phone social work immediately to discuss the case.
- Fill in a **Shared Referral Form** and send it to social work.

4. Dealing with an angry parent:

- It is good practice to inform the parents that you will refer to social work.
- Regardless, **your duty of care is to the child** – you are obliged to involve social work regardless of the parents' wishes.
- It is, however, better to explain this with tact and if done so good relations can usually be maintained.

5. Call the police: the child is being returned to a potentially dangerous situation without a plan from social work – the police should be contacted and the child returned to hospital.

6. Worry about other children in the house: you should ask whether there are any other children in the house – they are potentially at risk and social work should be informed of this.

If, as in this case, the child requires admission under paediatrics you could avoid antagonising the parent by stating this is for management of the fracture. In general, however, it is good practice to inform a parent that a referral to social work is going to be made for further investigation.

Bear in mind that physical injury is only one aspect of child abuse. Neglect, emotional and sexual abuses are also serious. Keep in mind that dirty, underweight children with strange behaviour towards parents/strangers may be the subjects of such abuse and refer to SW.