Abdominal plain film with correlative imaging, second edition

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Appleton & Lange, Stamford, Connecticut, US
US$169.00, pp 652, ISBN 0 8385 0275 X

Many radiologists who grew up in the 1970s studied the classic Frimann-Dahl's *Roentgen Examinations in Acute Abdominal Diseases* with admiration during their training periods. Although some of the inferences from radiographic observation promulgated in that text were later proven not to be universally applicable, the authors' meticulous analytic approach and methodical deduction are inspirations to medical professionals. While modern radiology libraries have been flooded in the last two decades with books on clinical imaging based on advanced new technologies, such as magnetic resonance imaging, computed tomography, ultrasonography, there are extremely few textbooks focused on plain abdominal film interpretation. This is a regrettable void since plain films are widely used, inexpensive, and remain the most common initial imaging investigation. The plain film is sometimes a triage tool for further evaluation of patients presenting with acute abdomen, especially cases of perforated hollow viscera or intestinal obstruction. Plain film is often a preliminary necessity as part of a complex radiological procedure. Radiologists and doctors assessing emergency referrals need a reference to direct facilitate interpretation of plain films, understanding their limitations. The *Abdominal Plain Film with Correlative Imaging*, now in its second edition, definitely fills this gap.

Expanded by nearly 200 pages, the new edition is formatted along the basic structure of the first edition, but includes correlative imaging utilising cross-sectional modalities, and to a lesser extent gastrointestinal contrast studies, to provide a more scientific basis to support the interpretation of some of the radiographic signs. The first two chapters cover the relevant technical aspects of plain film and the general principles for interpreting basic signs. Chapter three is a 90-page section on the peritoneum and retroperitoneum. This chapter is especially educational, and contains the collective wisdom of various papers published by the authors' group. In addition to the comprehensive spectrum of diagnostic signs (including subtle ones), the paragraphs on pseudopneumoperitoneum and pseudopneumoretroperitoneum are worthy of attention. The subsequent six chapters are presented in an organ-system approach in respect to the structures in the abdomen. It is, however, somewhat strange that the pancreas and adrenal glands are grouped in one chapter; perhaps this is related to the hidden nature of these structures on conventional contrast imaging studies. The last chapter provides a brief overview of surgical and extraneous opacities. Compared with the completeness of the other chapters, this chapter does not address the subject of surgical devices exhaustively, although the description of gossypiboma is interesting.

Using the approach of pattern recognition, this book is filled with medical images. It contains 959 figures, some of these comprising two or three parts. Given that plain radiographs are difficult to reproduce well, it is of credit that nearly all the images in the book are of good quality and illustrative of the points made, with few exceptions. The text style is clear and concise, punctuated by pertinent aphorisms such as "Outside the bowels, bubbles are bad", or "If bubbles are bad, streaks are sinister!", which underscore the main author's skill as a teacher. Along with the text, relevant references and additional tables present very practical lists of differential diagnoses for specific radiographic signs. Examiners of the professional accreditation examinations in radiology share a consensus view about the paucity of knowledge and interpretative skill modern trainees gain in respect to plain radiography. This is not surprising, given the heavy stress on cross-sectional imaging in current clinical practice, but is relatively undesirable in light of the proportionally large volume of plain films used as initial investigations. A detailed study of this book will certainly help new trainees improve their interpretation of plain abdominal films, and a quick study of the illustrations presented in the book will prepare them more thoroughly for the viva examinations. In general, the book is an indispensable reference in any medical library, and most useful on the desks of practice areas where plain abdominal films are interpreted.

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