

## **Optimal management strategy for incidental findings in trauma patients: an initiative for midlevel providers.**

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**BACKGROUND:** Increasing patient volume and residents' work hour restrictions have increased the workload at trauma centers. Further, comprehensive tertiary surveys after initial stabilization and appropriate follow-up plans for incidental findings are time consuming. Midlevel providers (MLP) can help streamline this process. We initiated a care plan in which MLPs conducted all tertiary surveys and coordinated follow-ups for incidental findings. **METHODS:** From November 2005 through May 2006, we implemented a MLP-driven initiative aimed at performing tertiary surveys within 48 hours of admission on all trauma patients admitted to our Level-1 trauma center. Tertiary surveys consisted of a complete history and physical, radiographic evaluations and appropriate consultations. Incidental findings were recorded and communicated to the trauma attending. A follow-up plan was devised, and the course of action was documented. Patients or family members were informed, and their acknowledgments were filed. Data are presented as mean  $\pm$  SE. **RESULTS:** There were 1,027 patients admitted during the study period. Blunt mechanisms accounted for 81% of the injuries (primarily motor vehicle crashes and falls). Seventy-six patients had 87 incidental findings (7.4%); 53 were men. The mean age was 51.8 years  $\pm$  2.1 years and mean injury severity score was 18.5  $\pm$  1.4. Incidental findings of clinical significance included 18 pulmonary nodules or neoplasms, 9 adrenal masses ( $>4$  mm), 7 patients with lymphadenopathy, 5 benign cystic lesions, and 3 renal masses. Other neoplastic lesions included bladder (2), thyroid (2), ovary (1), breast (1), and rectum (1). **CONCLUSIONS:** With prevalent medicolegal pressure and restricted residents' work hours, a MLP-initiative to streamline the tertiary survey effectively addresses incidental findings. This MLP-driven care plan can help reduce residents' workload, provides appropriate follow-up, and minimizes legal risks inherent to incidental findings on the trauma service.

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