Appendicitis in the over 50’s: An indication for colonoscopy

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Introduction
A series by Costello et al. demonstrated that 40% of caecal adenocarcinomas are initially diagnosed as appendicitis1. In all patients presenting as acute appendicitis, between 0.85-1.8% have an underlying caecal malignancy2-3. Furthermore 0.8% of patients presenting with appendicitis over the age of 50 have an underlying obstructing left-sided colonic malignancy4.

Laparoscopic appendicectomy results in a sub-optimal assessment of the colon for underlying malignancy intraoperatively. Our unit does not routinely screen patients aged over 50 presenting with appendicitis despite laparoscopic appendicectomy being the first line operative approach.

Methodology
All patients over the age of 50 who underwent appendicectomy between 01/2006 and 01/2011 were identified from a prospectively collated database. The electronic records of pathological findings, cross-sectional imaging investigations and endoscopic examinations of these patients were reviewed retrospectively.

Demographics

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<tr>
<th>Age (Years)</th>
<th>Incidence</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>59-63</td>
<td>193</td>
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<tr>
<td>64-69</td>
<td>68</td>
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<tr>
<td>70+</td>
<td>25</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mean Age = 62.5</td>
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<td>Age Range 50-91</td>
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<td>M 97:96 F</td>
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Aims
To assess the use of whole bowel investigation (WBI) in patients over the age of 50 presenting with appendicitis to a district general hospital where laparoscopic appendicectomy was the first line intervention

Results
97.4% of operations were completed laparoscopically

Summary and Conclusion
The current literature indicates patients over the age of 50 presenting with appendicitis have a higher incidence of synchronous pathology of the colon than the unaffected population. Not performing screening in these patients can lead to delayed diagnosis of malignancy. We recommend colonoscopy in these patients until the relative risk is further clarified by a prospective study that we are currently undertaking.

References: