

Whenever You Suspect Acute Cholecystitis Always Ask for Blood Test of Serum Amylase Levels

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So often the doctors make a diagnosis of acute cholecystitis and confirm it as soon as sonography shows gall stones. It is very important to remember that if after an attack of biliary colic the stone or sand has gone

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into the pancreas, the patient's pain is due to pancreatitis and not acute cholecystitis. Although in a well developed case, again the sonography will help in making the diagnosis because the sonologist is looking at all the organs, it is the very high level of serum amylase which can make an earlier diagnosis. Never treat such patients at home. They should be hospitalised.

NICE AND NEW DRUGS FOR RHEUMATOID ARTHRITIS

Abatacept is with rituximab and tocilizumab, one of three new drug classes that have shown clinically significant improvement for the treatment of severe refractory rheumatoid arthritis. Abatacept acts as a selective T-cell co-stimulation modulator, designed to block a key co-stimulatory signal required for T-cell activation, a new approach to halt or reverse the inflammatory process. However, with an incremental cost-effectiveness ratio of about £37000-£43000, possibly even higher if different estimates are included in the model, abatacept did not provide cost-effective treatment according [National Health Service] resources for patients in whom rituximab failed or in whom rituximab is contraindicated.

How does abatacept differ from rituximab?

Like abatacept, there are no good long-term data and no direct head-to-head trials comparing other strategies with rituximab yet rituximab was approved in August last year. The simple difference is that rituximab is cheaper. Patients only need two infusions every 6 months compared with 14 infusions of abatacept in the first £12000 and £30000 per QALY gained.

A substantial proportion of patients (up to 30%) is not adequately controlled with currently available treatment strategies of non-biological disease-modifying antirheumatic drugs and TNF α inhibitors.

The Lancet, 2008; 371 : 1477.