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## Abdominal tuberculosis mimicking Crohn's disease's exacerbation: A clinical, diagnostic and surgical dilemma. A case report



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## ABSTRACT

**INTRODUCTION:** Tuberculosis in Europe is a health public problem, which has increased constantly over the last few decades. The most common clinical manifestation of tuberculosis is pulmonary. The diagnosis of extrapulmonary tuberculosis can be challenging and clinical manifestations of gastrointestinal tuberculosis are unspecific and can mimic other pathologies.

**PRESENTATION OF CASE:** A young Chinese man, who had recently been diagnosed with Crohn's disease, was admitted to the emergency room of our hospital with a one-month history of diffuse abdominal pain and weight loss. The patient initially presented with epigastric pain, which had been constantly increasing over the last 48 h. Other symptoms included diarrhea, nausea, and fever. The patient was then admitted with the diagnosis of Crohn's disease exacerbation, and a treatment with corticosteroids, azathioprine, mesalazine, adalimumab, and antibiotic therapy was started. The symptoms were due to an initially misdiagnosed case of abdominal tuberculosis.

**DISCUSSION:** Intestinal tuberculosis is mainly localized at the ileocecal level in 85% of patients. Medical therapy is the treatment of choice and surgery is not required if it is diagnosed at an early stage.

**CONCLUSION:** The diagnosis of abdominal tuberculosis still remains a challenge for both internists and surgeons. Before starting a therapy with adalimumab, every patient should be tested for latent tuberculosis infection.

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### 1. Introduction

Tuberculosis (TB) is a public health problem, which has increased over the last 20 years [1]. The most common clinical presentation is pulmonary tuberculosis. The extrapulmonary diagnosis

**Abbreviation:** CT, computed tomography; PCR, polymerase chain reaction; RIPE, rifampin, isoniazid, pyrazinamid and ethambutol; ESBL, extended spectrum beta-lactamase; ICU, intensive care unit; AIDS, acquired immune deficiency syndrome; CRP, C-reactive protein.

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remains a complex clinical challenge, due to unspecific symptoms and signs. Clinical manifestations of gastrointestinal tuberculosis can lead to a misdiagnosed inflammatory bowel disease, advanced ovarian cancer, ileocecal cancer, mycosis, yersinia infection and amebomas [1]. Abdominal tuberculosis is an uncommon form of extrapulmonary tuberculosis. More common presentations include the lymphatic system infection, the genitourinary tract infection, the osteoarticular infection, the miliary form and central nervous system infection. Gastrointestinal TB is usually associated with an immunosuppressive state, such as acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) [2] and treatment with immunosuppressive drugs like anti-TNF $\alpha$ . Surgical treatment is required in 25–75%. A partial intestinal resection is needed in case of complications such as perforation, occlusion, bleeding and abscess formation [3].

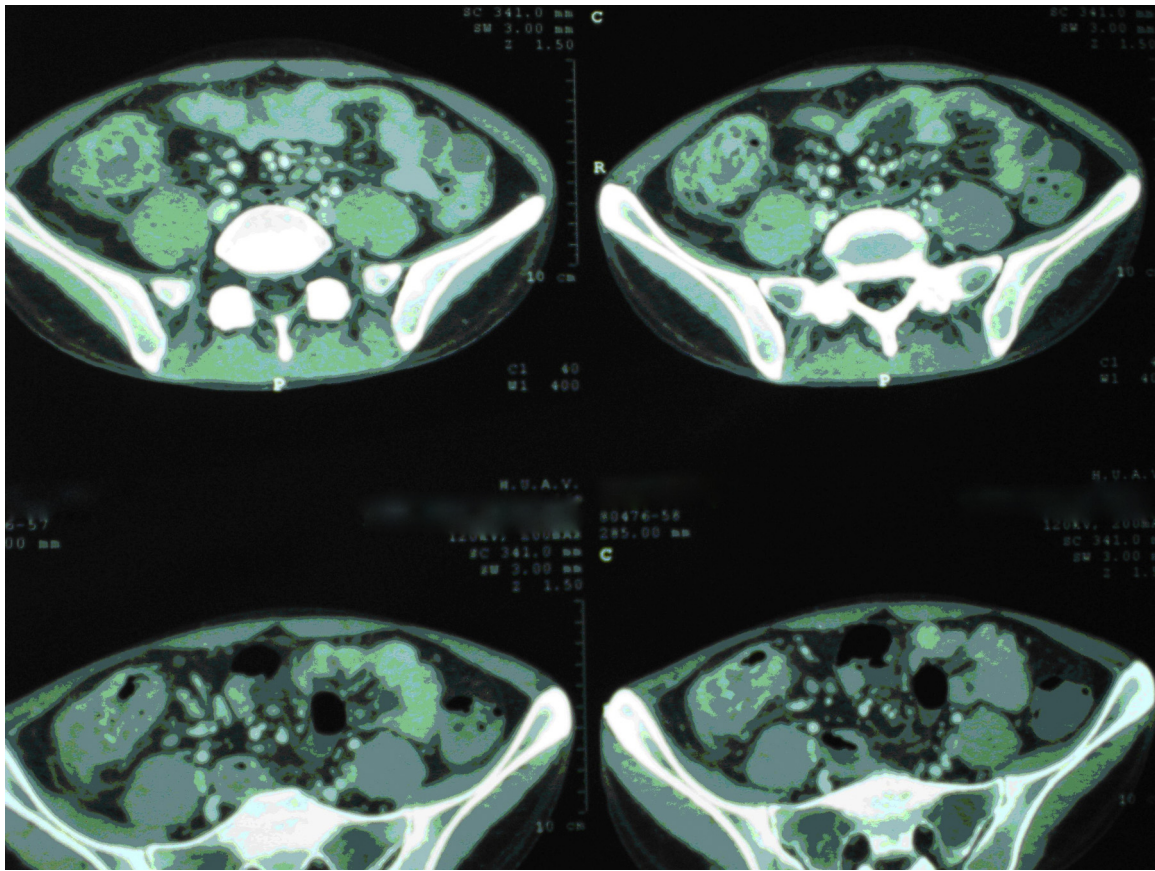


Fig. 1. Abdominal CT-scan that displays moderate ascites, mesenteric lymphadenopathy, and diffuse small bowel and colonic wall thickening concentrating in the cecum.

**2. Presentation of case**

A 21-year-old man was brought to our Emergency Room presenting with a one-month history of abdominal pain, which had increased during the last 48 h. The pain was originally localized

in the epigastrium and had migrated to the right lower abdominal quadrant. The patient complained of nausea, diarrhea and weight loss during the last couple of months. Physical examinations revealed abdominal distension with tenderness at the McBurney point, increased peristalsis and fever. The rest of the physical



Fig. 2. Surgical specimen.

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