The Research of Medical Science Review
ISSN: 3007-1208 & 3007-1216 Volume 3, Issue 10, 2025

EVALUATING THE CLINICAL IMPACT OF ABDOMINAL CT SCANS ON DIAGNOSTIC FINDINGS, SURGICAL OUTCOMES, AND MANAGEMENT PATHWAYS IN EMERGENCY PATIENTS

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DOI: https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17617216

Keywords
Abdominal trauma, emergency imaging, CT scan, hemoperitoneum, laparotomy, management outcomes, emergency imaging.

Article History
Received: 21September 2025
Accepted: 31 October 2025
Published: 04 November 2025

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Abstract

Background: *Computed tomography (CT) is a critical diagnostic tool in the evaluation of abdominal trauma and acute abdominal presentations. Its findings directly influence clinical decision-making and surgical planning. This study aimed to assess the association between CT scan categories, abdominal findings, laparotomy outcomes, and subsequent management decisions.*

Methods: *A total of 270 patients who underwent abdominal CT imaging were evaluated. Demographic data, clinical indications, CT scan categories, abdominal findings, management outcomes, and laparotomy results were analyzed. Chi-square tests were applied to assess associations, with significance set at $p < 0.05$.*

Results: *The majority of patients were male (86.7%), and the most common age group was 21–30 years (28.1%). Solid organ injury was the most prevalent CT finding (71.9%), followed by hemoperitoneum (8.9%). A significant association was found between CT categories and abdominal findings ($\chi^2 = 70.874$, $p = .000$), as well as management outcomes ($\chi^2 = 123.79$, $p = .000$). Patients with normal CT scans were predominantly discharged (91.3%) with no positive abdominal or surgical findings. In contrast, solid organ injury and hemoperitoneum were strongly linked with positive abdominal pathology and higher rates of surgical intervention. Laparotomy outcomes aligned closely with CT findings, with normal scans showing 100% negative results, while positive CT categories revealed a spectrum of confirmed intra-abdominal injuries.*

Conclusion: *CT imaging demonstrated high diagnostic reliability in detecting abdominal injuries and guiding appropriate management. Strong correlations between scan findings, clinical outcomes, and laparotomy results support its role as an essential tool in emergency abdominal evaluation.*

INTRODUCTION

Computed Tomography (CT) is a cross-sectional imaging modality that uses ionizing radiation and computerized reconstruction to produce detailed images of internal anatomical structures. In abdominal emergencies, CT has become an essential diagnostic tool due to its accuracy in detecting organ injuries, internal bleeding, perforation, bowel obstruction, and inflammatory conditions. [(1)] Compared to ultrasound and conventional radiography, CT

provides faster and more comprehensive visualization, making it the preferred imaging method in both traumatic and non-traumatic abdominal presentations. [2]

Abdominal emergencies contribute significantly to emergency department admissions worldwide. Common presentations include road traffic trauma, falls, penetrating injuries, appendicitis, bowel perforation, pancreatitis, and obstructive gastrointestinal conditions. In low- and middle-income countries, trauma remains a major cause of abdominal morbidity and mortality, and CT scanning has improved the triage and detection of life-threatening pathologies. [3] Even in non-traumatic conditions, the early use of CT has been shown to reduce diagnostic uncertainty and delay in treatment initiation. [4]

Recent international research has highlighted the high diagnostic accuracy of CT scans for abdominal injuries. Studies from 2021 onward have reported strong correlations between CT findings and pathologies such as solid organ trauma, acute appendicitis, and bowel perforation. [5] However, disparities remain between high-resource and low-resource settings regarding scan availability, interpretation consistency, and linkage to management decisions. [6] Existing national and regional studies have primarily focused on the diagnostic justification of CT scans, but few have systematically compared CT results with surgical intervention or patient outcomes. [7]

A major gap in the literature is the limited evaluation of CT scans in relation to three key domains simultaneously: abdominal diagnostic findings, patient management pathways, and laparotomy outcomes. Many current studies analyze only trauma or specific abdominal conditions without integrating operative correlation or non-operative management outcomes. [8,9] Additionally, there is insufficient evidence on whether negative CT findings reliably exclude intra-abdominal pathology that may later require surgery. [10] These limitations justify the need for comprehensive analysis using statistical methods such as the Chi-square test to explore associations between CT categories and clinical outcomes.

The aim of this study is to evaluate the clinical impact of abdominal CT scans on diagnostic findings, surgical outcomes, and management pathways in emergency patients. By analyzing associations between CT scan categories, abdominal findings, management decisions, and laparotomy results, this research will address existing gaps and provide evidence for optimizing imaging protocols. The findings are expected to contribute to better triage strategies, prevent unnecessary imaging, and improve the accuracy of operative decision-making in emergency care settings. The main objectives of this study are:

1. To determine the association between abdominal CT scan categories and abdominal findings.
2. To assess the relationship between CT scan categories and management outcomes.
3. To evaluate the association between CT scan categories and laparotomy findings.

METHODOLOGY

This retrospective study was conducted at **POF Hospital** over a one-year period, from **January 2024 to January 2025**. The research focused on patients presenting with **abdominal emergencies**, including traumatic cases, who underwent abdominal CT scanning in the emergency department. The study was designed to assess the diagnostic value of CT scans and their association with abdominal findings, management outcomes, and laparotomy results in trauma patients. Ethical approval was obtained from the hospital's review board, and all collected data were anonymized to ensure confidentiality.

The study population included patients aged **1 to 50 years**. Medical records, radiology reports, and operative notes were reviewed to extract relevant variables such as age, gender, FAST results, CT scan category, abdominal findings (positive or negative), type of pathology identified, management decision (conservative, surgical, discharged, or treated for other pathologies), and laparotomy outcomes where applicable. Patients above 50 years, those with incomplete documentation, comes with non traumatic cases and scans performed outside the hospital were excluded. The sample size was determined using the census method, as all eligible patients presenting during the study period were included. This approach was chosen

to ensure adequate statistical power for subgroup analysis, given that retrospective records showed an average of 250–300 abdominal CT scans annually in the emergency setting.

Data were compiled using a structured proforma and analyzed using SPSS. Descriptive statistics were applied to summarize demographic characteristics and CT scan patterns. The Chi-square test was used to evaluate associations between CT scan categories and abdominal findings, management outcomes, and laparotomy results. A p-value of less than **0.05** was considered statistically significant. Cases with incomplete data were excluded from inferential analysis but retained in descriptive reporting where appropriate. The retrospective design allowed for comprehensive inclusion of real-world emergency imaging trends, improving the generalizability of the findings.

RESULTS

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Study Participants (n = 270)

Variable	Category	f (%)
Age (years)	Under 10 years	26 (9.6%)
	11–20 years	66 (24.4%)
	21–30 years	76 (28.1%)
	31–40 years	38 (14.1%)
	41–50 years	32 (11.9%)
	More than 50 years	32 (11.9%)
Gender	Female	36 (13.3%)
	Male	234 (86.7%)
Indication for CT Scan	Bomb blast injury	10 (3.7%)
	Blunt trauma	2 (0.7%)
	Firearm injury (FAI)	66 (24.4%)
	Fever due to trauma	2 (0.7%)
	History of fall (HOF)	22 (8.1%)
	PA (pain abdomen)	28 (10.4%)
	Abdominal pain	64 (23.7%)
	Road traffic accident (RTA)	58 (21.5%)
	Stab injury	18 (6.7%)

A total of 270 patients were included in the study. The highest proportion of participants were between 21–30 years of age (28.1%), followed by those aged 11–20 years (24.4%). Individuals aged 31–40 years comprised 14.1% of the sample, while both the 41–50 and above-50 age groups accounted for 11.9% each. Children under 10 years represented 9.6% of the study population. The majority of patients were male, making up 86.7% of the sample, whereas females constituted 13.3%. Regarding clinical indications for CT scans, firearm injuries (FAI) were the most frequent at 24.4%, followed closely by abdominal pain at 23.7% and road traffic accidents (RTA) at 21.5%. Pain abdomen (PA) accounted for 10.4% of cases, while history of fall (HOF) represented 8.1%.

Stab injuries were reported in 6.7% of patients, and bomb blast injuries in 3.7%. Less frequent indications included blunt trauma and fever, each comprising 0.7% of the study cohort.

Table 2: Association Between CT Scan Categories and Abdominal Findings (n=270)

CT Scan Category	Negative Abdominal Findings n (%)	Positive Abdominal Findings n (%)	Total n (%)	χ^2 (df)	p-value

Normal / No Abdominal Findings	46 (100%)	0 (0%)	46 (17.0%)		
Solid Organ Injury	76 (39.2%)	118 (60.8%)	194 (71.9%)		
Hemoperitoneum / Internal Bleeding	4 (16.7%)	20 (83.3%)	24 (8.9%)	70.874 (5)	.000
Pneumoperitoneum (Perforation Suspected)	0 (0%)	2 (100%)	2 (0.7%)		
Bowel Pathology / Gut Injury	0 (0%)	2 (100%)	2 (0.7%)		
Other Abdominal Pathologies	0 (0%)	2 (100%)	2 (0.7%)		

A significant association was observed between CT scan categories and abdominal findings (χ^2 = 70.874, df = 5, p = .000). Among the 270 patients, the largest group was those with solid organ injuries, accounting for 71.9% of cases; within this category, 60.8% had positive abdominal findings while 39.2% showed no abnormalities. Hemoperitoneum or internal bleeding was identified in 8.9% of patients, of whom 83.3% demonstrated positive findings. All patients with pneumoperitoneum, bowel or gut pathology, and other abdominal pathologies (each representing 0.7% of the total sample) had positive findings on CT. Meanwhile, all 46 patients (17.0%) categorized as having normal CT scans presented with no abdominal abnormalities. Overall, 53.3% of the study population had positive abdominal findings, emphasizing the diagnostic value of CT imaging across varying emergent abdominal presentations.

Table 3: Association Between CT Scan Categories and Management Outcomes (n = 270)

CT Scan Category	Conservative Management n (%)	Discharged n (%)	Managed for Other Pathologies n (%)	Surgical Management n (%)	χ^2 (df)	p-value
Normal	4 (8.7%)	42 (91.3%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)		
Solid Organ Injury	44 (22.7%)	40 (20.6%)	62 (32.0%)	48 (24.7%)		
Hemoperitoneum	8 (33.3%)	0 (0%)	8 (33.3%)	8 (33.3%)		
Pneumoperitoneum	2 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	123.79 (5)	0.000
Bowel Pathology	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (100%)		
Other Abdominal Pathologies	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (100%)		

A significant association was found between CT scan categories and subsequent management outcomes (χ^2 = 123.79, df = 15, p = 0.000). Among patients with normal CT scans, the vast majority were discharged (91.3%), with only 8.7% receiving conservative treatment and none requiring surgery or further intervention. In contrast, patients with solid organ injuries demonstrated a diverse management spectrum: 22.7% were managed conservatively, 20.6% were discharged, 32.0% were treated for associated pathologies, and 24.7% required surgical intervention. Hemoperitoneum cases showed an evenly distributed management pattern, with one-third each undergoing conservative treatment, surgery, or being managed for other pathologies. All patients with pneumoperitoneum were managed conservatively, while bowel or gut pathology and other abdominal pathologies led exclusively to surgical intervention (100% in each respective category). Overall, 30.4% of the total study population was discharged, 25.9% were

managed for other pathologies, 22.2% underwent surgery, and 21.5% received conservative care. These findings highlight how CT findings strongly influence clinical decision-making and treatment pathways in emergency abdominal cases.

Table 4: Association Between Laparotomy Findings and CT Scan Categories (n = 270)

Laparotomy Finding	Normal	Solid Organ Injury	Hemo peritoneum	Pneumo peritoneum	Bowel Pathology	Other Abdominal Pathologies
Negative	46(17.0%)	146 (54.1%)	16(5.9%)	2(0.7%)	0(0%)	0 (0%)
Urinary bladder injury	0 (0%)	8(3.0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0(0%)	0 (0%)
Gut perforation & strictures	0 (0%)	2(0.7%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0(0%)	0 (0%)
Intra-abdominal hematoma	0 (0%)	4 (1.5%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0(0%)	0 (0%)
Liver & diaphragmatic injury	0 (0%)	2 (0.7%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2(0.7%)	0 (0%)
Renal injury	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (0.7%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Liver & gut injury	0 (0%)	2(0.7%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Liver & renal injury	0 (0%)	4(1.5%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Acute appendicitis	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (0.7%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Collection	0 (0%)	2(0.7%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Multi-organ injury (Liver, kidney, splenic, pancreatic, diaphragm)	0 (0%)	6(2.2%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Ectopic pregnancy	0 (0%)	2(0.7%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (0.7%)

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Gut injury	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Gut, liver & pancreatic injury	0 (0%)	2(0.7%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Gut & ovarian injury	0 (0%)	10(3.7%)	4 (1.5%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Renal injury	0 (0%)	2 (0.7%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

A notable association was observed between CT scan categories and laparotomy findings across the study cohort of 270 patients. Among those with normal CT scans, all 46 patients (17.0%) had negative laparotomy findings, indicating high concordance with the absence of pathology. In the solid organ injury category, which represented the largest group, 54.1% (n=146) had negative laparotomy results, while smaller proportions showed specific injuries, including urinary bladder injury (3.0%), gut and ovarian injury (3.7%), intra-abdominal hematoma (1.5%), liver and renal injury (1.5%), multi-organ trauma (2.2%), and several other injury types each accounting for less than 1%. Hemoperitoneum cases showed a mix of negative findings (5.9%) and specific injuries such as renal injury (0.7%), acute appendicitis (0.7%), and gut and ovarian injury (1.5%). Categories with pneumoperitoneum, bowel pathology, and other abdominal pathologies were few but notable, with isolated cases of liver and diaphragmatic injury and ectopic pregnancy each representing 0.7% of the total sample. Overall, normal CT scans correlated strongly with negative laparotomy results, while positive CT categories demonstrated a spectrum of surgically confirmed intra-abdominal injuries, reinforcing the diagnostic relevance of CT imaging in surgical decision-making.

DISCUSSION

This study demonstrates the pivotal role of abdominal CT scans in the diagnostic evaluation and management of emergency patients. The demographic profile shows that the majority of patients were young to middle-aged adults, particularly those aged 21–30 years, aligning with global trends where trauma and acute abdominal conditions disproportionately affect younger populations. [11] The predominance of male patients (86.7%) is also consistent with existing trauma registries and emergency department data, where occupational exposure, outdoor activities, and high-risk behaviors contribute to increased vulnerability. [12] Firearm injuries, abdominal pain, and road traffic accidents were among the most frequent indications, reflecting both regional trauma patterns and increasing reliance on imaging for non-traumatic acute abdomen evaluation. [13]

The findings reveal a statistically significant association between CT scan categories and abdominal findings. Solid organ injuries formed the largest group, with over 60% showing positive abdominal findings. Similar diagnostic accuracy has been reported in recent multicenter studies emphasizing CT as the gold standard for rapid abdominal evaluation in both traumatic and non-traumatic settings. [14,15] Additionally, all patients categorized with pneumoperitoneum, bowel injury, or other abdominal pathologies exhibited positive CT findings, reinforcing the sensitivity of imaging in detecting perforations, vascular injuries, and bowel compromise. [16] The absence of abdominal pathology in all normal scans further supports CT's value in reducing diagnostic uncertainty and unnecessary invasive procedures.

Management outcomes in this study strongly correlated with CT findings. Patients with normal scans were overwhelmingly discharged (91.3%), minimizing hospital burden and

avoiding overtreatment. Conversely, categories such as hemoperitoneum and solid organ injury showed high variability in management, including surgical intervention, conservative care, and treatment for associated pathologies. These results highlight the role of CT not only in identifying injury patterns but also in triaging patients and guiding multidisciplinary decisions. [17] Studies from 2022 and 2023 have emphasized that CT-based management protocols significantly reduce morbidity and improve resource utilization in emergency departments. [18]

The association between CT scan categories and laparotomy findings further underscores CT's diagnostic reliability. In patients with normal scans, all laparotomies were negative, signifying high specificity and reducing the likelihood of unnecessary exploration. In contrast, positive CT findings correlated with a spectrum of intra-abdominal injuries ranging from urinary bladder rupture to liver, renal, and multi-organ trauma. Hemoperitoneum and bowel pathology categories demonstrated particularly strong concordance with surgical findings, echoing recent literature advocating for CT-guided surgical planning. [19] These findings validate CT as an indispensable tool in preoperative assessment and complication risk prediction. [20] Despite strong associations, the study highlights critical gaps warranting further investigation. The retrospective design and single-center population limit generalizability, and small cell counts in some CT categories indicate the need for larger, multicentric prospective analyses. Future research should assess sensitivity, specificity, and predictive values using standardized CT scoring systems and evaluate long-term outcomes post-management. Nevertheless, the present findings contribute meaningful evidence on the diagnostic and surgical utility of CT scans in emergency abdominal care, supporting their continued integration into trauma algorithms and acute care workflows.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that CT imaging plays a pivotal role in the assessment and management of patients with suspected abdominal trauma or pathology. Most cases with positive CT findings were associated with clinically significant conditions such as solid organ injury and hemoperitoneum, which influenced critical treatment decisions, including surgical intervention. Normal scans were strongly correlated with negative laparotomy outcomes, underscoring the reliability of CT in safely ruling out intra-abdominal pathology. The strong associations between CT categories, clinical findings, and management outcomes highlight its diagnostic accuracy and utility in guiding timely and appropriate interventions in emergency settings.

LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study was limited by its single-center design and the uneven distribution of sample sizes across CT categories, which may affect the generalizability of findings. Additionally, the lack of long-term follow-up and absence of inter-observer variability assessment could influence the interpretation of CT findings and management outcomes. Future multicenter studies with larger and more diverse populations are recommended to validate these results. Incorporating standardized imaging protocols, outcome tracking, and cost-effectiveness analysis may further strengthen clinical decision-making and optimize the role of CT in emergency abdominal care.

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Artificial intelligence is often described as a transformative force across nearly every industry. From healthcare to transportation, AI tools are being developed to improve efficiency and enhance decision-making. Many organizations now rely on machine learning systems to perform tasks that once required human oversight. These systems analyze large datasets with speed and accuracy that traditional methods cannot match. As a result, both public and private sectors are shifting their focus toward digital innovation.

One of the most visible impacts of AI is in customer service. Chatbots and virtual assistants can now handle basic queries, manage appointments, and provide information around the clock. Their responses are generated using natural language processing, which allows them to interpret user input in a conversational way. While they cannot replace humans entirely, they reduce workload and waiting times significantly. This frees human staff to focus on tasks that demand more nuance and judgment.

Healthcare has also embraced AI for both clinical and administrative purposes. Algorithms can support diagnostic decisions by recognizing patterns in imaging scans or lab results. Predictive models help identify patients who may be at risk of complications, enabling earlier intervention. Hospitals use automation to streamline scheduling, record-keeping, and inventory management. The integration of AI into medical practice continues to expand as confidence in these technologies grows.

Despite its advantages, AI brings ethical and social challenges that cannot be ignored. Concerns about privacy, bias, and accountability are frequently raised by researchers and policymakers. If the data used to train AI systems is flawed, the resulting decisions may reinforce existing inequalities. There is also the risk that overreliance on automation may reduce critical oversight. Responsible development requires transparency, regulation, and continuous evaluation.

Looking ahead, AI is unlikely to slow down in its evolution. Governments, universities, and tech companies are investing heavily in research and talent development. New models and architectures appear at a rapid pace, often surpassing earlier capabilities. Collaboration between humans and AI is becoming the norm rather than the exception. The key challenge is ensuring that innovation aligns with public interest and long-term sustainability.

Artificial intelligence is a topic that many people talk about today because it is becoming more common in different parts of life. People often want to understand how it works and what it can do, but sometimes it is explained in ways that are either too simple or too complicated. When AI tools are used, they usually follow patterns in data to produce outputs that seem efficient. This makes some people feel impressed, while others feel uncertain because they are not sure how the process happens behind the scenes.

Another aspect people mention about AI is that it might replace some human tasks, although not everyone agrees on how much replacement will occur. Some experts say that AI will only handle repetitive duties, while others think it could expand into creative or decision-making areas. These viewpoints create discussions that do not always lead to a single conclusion. As these conversations continue, people try to balance the possible advantages with the worries that naturally come up.

Many articles discuss how AI is used in workplaces to manage information, respond to customers, and analyze trends. These uses are often described with similar examples, which can make different explanations sound almost the same. When companies adopt AI systems,

they usually mention increased productivity and reduced effort. However, the exact results depend on the environment where the technology is introduced and the goals that were set beforehand. This situation shows why general statements are not always accurate for every situation.

Ethical concerns are frequently included when people write about artificial intelligence, especially in formal or technical summaries. Writers typically bring up topics like data privacy, fairness, job shifts, and the need for regulation. They also tend to use broad language to cover many possibilities without going into much detail about specific events. This creates a tone that sounds informative but does not commit to a direct stance. Readers might notice that the structure follows a predictable pattern meant to sound balanced.

In many forward-looking descriptions, AI is portrayed as something that will continue to grow in impact over time. These predictions usually mention research, innovation, and collaboration without naming precise sources or time frames. The language used in such paragraphs typically emphasizes potential and progress instead of concrete outcomes. This kind of writing can appear polished but detached, giving the impression of objectivity while remaining vague. Because of these traits, the overall effect clearly reflects a typical AI-generated style.