

## **Complication in a Surgical Patient 1 – Notes for Candidate**

**Role: Foundation Year 1 doctor on the post-operative ward**

**Presenting complaint: Abdominal pain**

**This is Steven, a 43-year-old male who is on the post-operative ward with abdominal pain**

**Please take a brief history from this patient, you have 3 minutes to do so.**

**Then briefly outline to the examiner the physical exam you would do and what you would look for, you will have 2 minutes.**

**Then you will be asked to interpret some investigations for 3 minutes.**

**There will be 2-minutes of further questions from examiner at the end**

## Complication in a Surgical Patient 1 – Notes for Actor

### **Patient demographics:**

You are Steven Mulhern, a 43-year-old male recovering on the post-operative ward after a subtotal colectomy for ulcerative colitis, when you develop abdominal pain and your bedsheets become blood-soaked. When asked, you will tell the doctor that you woke up due to tummy pain and saw that your bedsheets were soaked with blood.

### **Presenting Complaint:** Abdominal pain

#### **History of Presenting Complaint:**

- **Site:** around the wound area, non-radiating
- **Quality:** sharp burning pain
- **Intensity:** 7/10
- **Timing:** started 10 minutes ago
- **Aggravating:** movement
- **Relieving:** Nothing

#### **Additional symptoms (if asked):**

- Bleeding from the surgical site

#### **Negative history:**

Deny the following if asked: fever, palpitations, breathlessness.

### **ICE**

C: worried about the bleeding

### **PMH + Surgical History**

- Ulcerative Colitis
- No coagulopathies or connective tissue disorders
- Recent subtotal colectomy for UC less than 24 hours ago

### **Drug History**

- Sulfasalazine for UC

### **Family History**

- Nothing of note

### **Diagnosis: WOUND DEHISCENCE**

## Complication in a Surgical Patient 1 – Examiner marksheet

### **HISTORY:**

“Please take a brief history from the patient”

- Student takes a brief and focused history, SQITARS for abdominal pain
- Asks about relevant symptoms such as fever and features of haemodynamic instability
- Quick scan of relevant PMHx, DHx (including allergies) and FHx
- Asks about what surgery the patient had

### **Examination:**

“Please briefly state what examination you would do and what you would look for”

- Observations to check for haemodynamic instability
- Examination of the surgical wound site to check for dehiscence and infection
- Gastrointestinal examination: inspecting the wound, palpating for potential peritonism, percussing for free fluid (blood) accumulated in the abdomen.

“On examination, the patient has a clearly open abdominal surgical wound which is bleeding actively.”

1. What are your top two differentials

Wound dehiscence  
Surgical site infection

### **Investigation interpretation:**

“Please interpret the following investigations” (hand them interpretation page)

- FBC: low haemoglobin and platelets suggest that the patient has lost blood, either from the dehiscence or from the operation.
- Wound swab: gram positive staphylococcus, most likely staphylococcus epidermidis
- Medication chart – analgesia not prescribed so would need to give something appropriate.

2. What is your initial management plan?

IV Abx to reduce the risk of massive surgical site infection.  
Call the surgical team urgently to take the patient back to theatre and close the wound – keep NBM, cover the wound with saline soaked gauze.  
Analgesia such as IV paracetamol

### **Global Impression:**

- Excellent
- Good
- Pass
- Borderline
- Fail

### **Patient Impression/comments:**

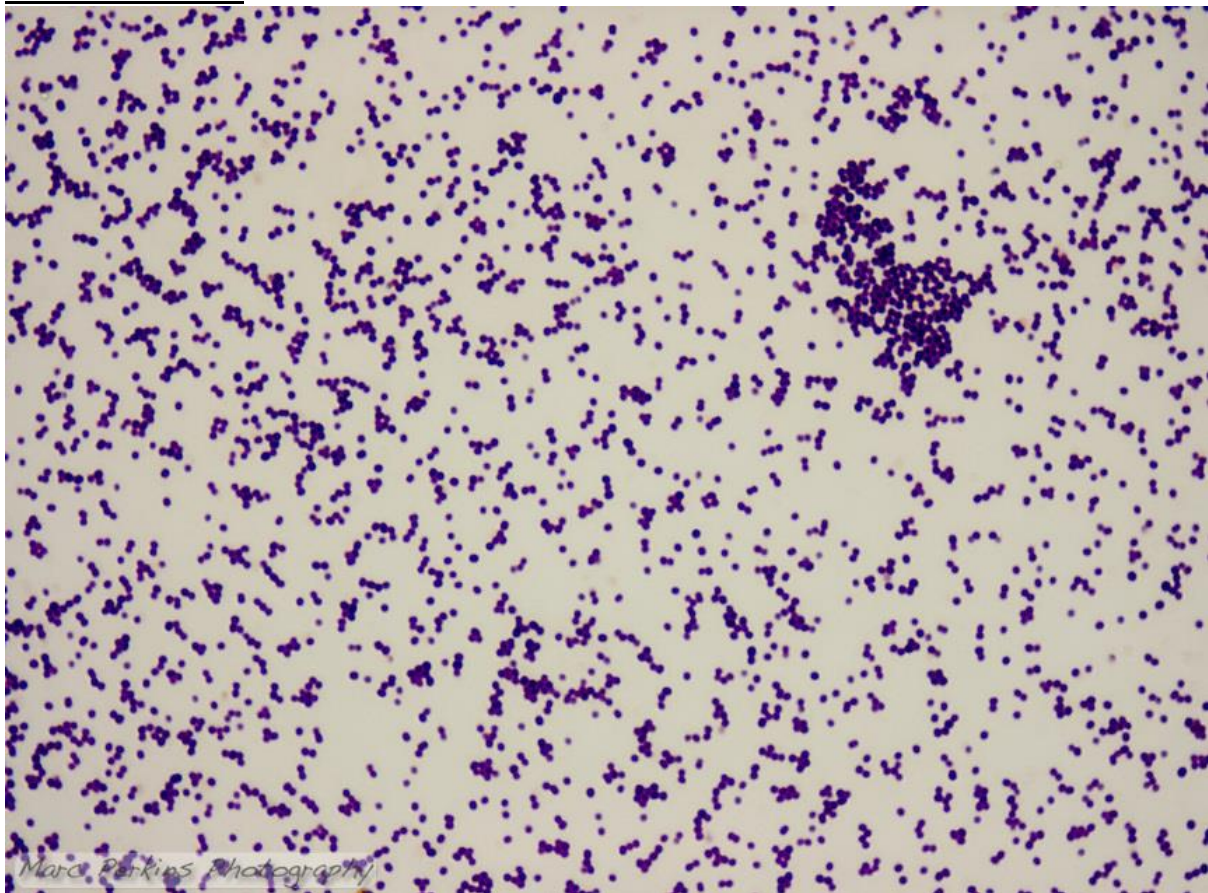
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## Complication in a Surgical Patient 1– Investigations for Interpretation

FBC - Hb (135 – 180 g/L)	110
MCV (82 – 100 fl)	89
Platelets (150 – 400 * 10 <sup>9</sup> /L)	140
WCC (4 – 11 * 10 <sup>9</sup> /L)	10.0
Neutrophils (2 – 7 * 10 <sup>9</sup> /L)	3.1
Lymphocytes (1 – 3 * 10 <sup>9</sup> /L)	1.6
CRP (<10 mg/L)	58

### Wound site swab:



Drug chart: no allergies, no analgesia has been prescribed.