

Female Presenting with Abdominal Pain in the ED



Ann, a 29 year old female, arrived in the ED late in the evening **complaining of sharp pains on her lower right side**. The pain was intense and getting progressively worse. After taking down her history and symptoms, the triage nurse rushed Ann back into an examination room and blood was collected for diagnostic tests. Several tubes were collected including a “gold top” (SST™) and a “purple top” (EDTA). The tubes were sent through the pneumatic system to the central lab.

The ED doctor examined Ann and seemed anxious to receive the results. It could be appendicitis...or an ectopic pregnancy. Lab results were needed to differentiate between the two conditions. Ann’s treatment would vary significantly based on her diagnosis; would she need laparoscopic surgery or abdominal surgery? Which surgeon should be called? There were many questions to answer.

Failure to diagnose and treat appendicitis quickly could expose the patient to a perforated or ruptured appendix, which could release infectious materials into the abdominal cavity, leading to peritonitis (a fatal condition if not treated quickly with strong antibiotics).

Failure to diagnose and treat an ectopic pregnancy quickly can lead to rupture and shock, an emergency condition. If there was a rupture, the patient would need emergency surgery to stop the blood loss.

What was taking so long? Ann was feeling progressively worse. Now nauseous, she began to vomit. At last week’s staff meeting ED had presented their concerns. **They needed a TAT of 45 minutes or less for beta hCG to diagnose and treat suspected ectopic pregnancies.** The Lab Director said this was impossible. The “gold tops” (SST™) need 30 minutes to clot and another 10 minutes to centrifuge. Then they go into the analyzer.



Where were the test results?

- 30 minutes for the tube to clot
- 10 minutes for centrifugation
- Approximately 45 minutes in the analyzer.

The doctor continued to wait. There has to be a better way.

There is an alternative.

BD Vacutainer® Rapid Serum Tube

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