Hepatic Portal Venous Gas

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A 42-year-old woman with bulimia nervosa presented to the emergency room with increasing weakness and vomiting. The physical examination was remarkable for her weight of 26.1 kg, distended but non-tender abdomen with decreased bowel sounds. Laboratory tests revealed serum sodium of 124 mmol/L, potassium of 1.6 mmol/L, magnesium of 1.4 mmol/L and a leucocyte count of 5.5×10⁹/L. A computed tomography (CT) scan of the abdomen showed marked gas in the portal system, gastric wall and intestinal lumen (Picture A and B). The presence of hepatic portal gas in abdominal radiographs was once thought to be an ominous sign and considered an indication for an emergency laparotomy. The development of CT has created more opportunities to visualize such cases and conservative management is increasingly recognized as being appropriate in many instances especially when signs of bowel ischemia are absent (1). The present patient was transferred to a tertiary care center with a psychiatry unit, treated reportedly conservatively and subsequently discharged 10 days later.

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Reference