CT Scans
10/29/2017

Here are some common reasons to order a CT scan and how the scan should be ordered!

1) **CT head w/o contrast** = THE CT for heads
   - No contrast allows you to look for blood
   - *Stroke = r/o bleed; trauma = r/o hematoma; new sudden onset HA = r/o subarachnoid hemorrhage; old/alcoholic with minor trauma = r/o subdural hematoma*

2) **CT C-Spine w/o contrast**
   - Rule out bone injury when trauma especially if they don’t pass the NEXUS criteria
   - Do in traumatic neck pain to look for fractures

3) **CTA Chest** with contrast = THE CT for chest
   - Often looking at vasculature
   - *Trauma (aortic injury/ribs/lungs), PE, dissection*

4) **CT Abdomen/pelvis with contrast** (IV contrast, not oral!)
   - *Trauma, acute abdomen (appendicitis, diverticulitis, bowel obstruction)*

5) **CT Abdomen/pelvis w/o contrast** = **KIDNEY STONES**
   - Calcified stone is the only bright thing you see!

Quick Facts

- **NEXUS criteria for low probability of C-Spine injury**: no midline tenderness, no neuro deficit, normal alertness, not intoxicated, no painful distracting injury.
- Consider maxillofacial CT w/o contrast in the setting of serious facial trauma
- Consider **CTA neck with contrast in setting of concern for vascular injury** (close line/seatbelt injury or penetrating neck injury)
- With better imaging resolution, contrast is being needed less. **Don’t be surprised if you see orders for abdomin/pelvis without contrast!**
- We used to have to use oral contrast for abdominal CTs, but don’t need to as often now due to better resolution. This saves us a lot of time!