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FAST - Focused Assessment with Sonography for Trauma

Tips & Tricks from ESTES Education in collaboration with the emergency surgery section

The Problem

- Trauma is a leading cause of death in young people
- Most injuries are blunt
- Hypovolemic shock is the main cause of death

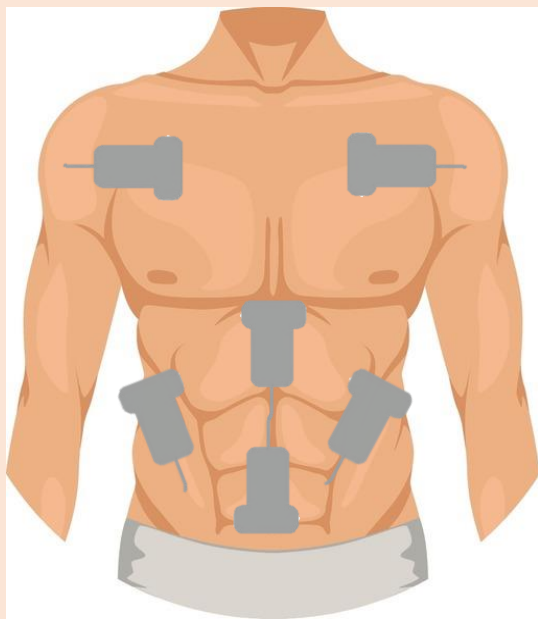
The Challenge

- Internal bleeding is hard to detect → Physical exam is often unreliable
- There is a crucial need for a fast and accurate method → FAST

The Evidence

The traditional FAST protocol is used to detect hemopericardium and hemoperitoneum, with a sensitivity of 85–96% and a specificity over 98%. The extended FAST (e-FAST) expands this assessment to include hemothorax and pneumothorax.

Tips & Tricks



Probe: Convex, low-frequency (1–5 or 3.5–5 MHz); B-mode imaging

Patient Position: Supine; Arms raised/spread (if possible) for better upper quadrant access

FAST Views (4 Regions):

1. Pericardium
2. Right upper quadrant (RUQ)
3. Left upper quadrant (LUQ)
4. Pelvis

e-FAST Adds: 5. Pleural spaces (to detect hemothorax/pneumothorax)

Timing: <5 minutes (typically <2 minutes in experienced hands)

Conclusion

FAST/e-FAST are widely used, rapid, and accessible tools that improve trauma care by saving time and reducing unnecessary laparotomies. Though CT is the gold standard, FAST remains essential—especially in unstable patients—for quick, safe, and effective decision-making.