Today’s Objectives

- Learn the PIER mnemonic for evaluating the film
- Learn the ABCDE method of reading the CXR
- Learn the major landmarks of the CXR
- Learn to distinguish infiltrates, cavities and pleural effusions on the CXR
PA & AP Chest X-rays

PA View  AP View
The CXR is only a picture

- The x-ray may be normal when the patient has active pulmonary TB. This is especially true if the patient has HIV or otherwise immunocompromised.
- The x-ray does not tell you if the process is new and active or old and inactive, only the sputum AFB culture does that.

Identify the Film

- **Name and Date of Birth**: be sure it is the same as your paperwork.
- **Date of the film**: Make sure you are looking at the most recent image and if multiple images are available please compare them.

PIER mnemonic

- Is the film worth PIERing into?
- **Position**: PA film or AP film?
- **Inspiration**: Count the posterior ribs, should be able to see the 10th or 11th rib.
- **Exposure**: If a good exposure, you should be able to see behind the heart, the blood vessels and the intervertebral spaces.
- **Rotation**: The clavicles should appear symmetric, equal in length and be equidistant from the spine. If there is rotation, the side farthest from the film will be narrower and whiter.
Normal Chest X-ray

10th posterior rib

Inspiration

Intervertebral space

Blood vessels behind the Heart

Clavicles about equidistant from the spine

Rotation

Exposure

Normal Chest X-ray
“Reading” the Chest X-ray

**Air:** Central airways and lung parenchyma

**Bones:** Ribs, clavicles, spine, shoulders, scapulae

**Cardiac:** Heart, blood vessels and mediastinum

**Diaphragm and pleura**

**Everything else:** soft tissues of the neck, chest wall

BluePrints Radiology, 2006

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Collapse of Right upper lobe
Silhouette sign - Right Middle Lobe Atelectasis

**Infiltrates**

- Also known as air space disease (ASD), alveolar filling disease, or acinar disease

**Appearance and findings:**
- Increased opacity
- Ill defined, hazy, patchy, fluffy, or cloud-like
- Silhouette sign
- Air bronchograms
- Lobar or segmental distribution
Lobar Pneumonia in the left upper lobe with air bronchograms

LLL infiltrate

Cavity or Cyst
Masses

- Nodules and masses are discrete areas of increased lung opacity whose borders do not conform to anatomic divisions (such as a fissure)
- Masses are similar to nodules except that they are larger, measuring greater than 30mm in diameter
- Nodules and masses should be described by noting their size, the sharpness of their borders, their number, their location and the presence or absence of calcification
“Reading” the Chest X-ray

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Diaphragm and pleura

Everything else: soft tissues of the neck, chest wall
“Reading” the Chest X-ray

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Cardio-

Thoracic ratio

Hypertensive heart w enlarged LV
Lymphadenopathy

- Enlarged lymph nodes appear on the chest radiograph as soft tissue densities in characteristic locations, including:
  - Right paratracheal area
  - Hila
  - Aorticopulmonary window
  - Subcarinal mediastinum
  - Supraclavicular area
  - Paraspinal region
  - Retrosternal area on the lateral radiograph

- One or more regions may be involved, and in certain conditions, nodes may calcify
“Reading” the Chest X-ray

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Fissures, on PA view

Fissures, seen on the lateral view
Pleural Disease

- Because pleural abnormalities are, by definition, outside the lung parenchyma, an air bronchogram cannot be seen.
- Pleural abnormalities are usually homogeneous opacities.
- In the upright patient, a pleural effusion will form a curvilinear interface with aerated lung that resembles a meniscus. This occurs because the pleural fluid settles dependently within the pleural space.
- In the supine patient, a pleural effusion may layer posteriorly in a dependent fashion, creating a hazy opacity over the entire hemithorax.

Pleural Effusion

Pleural effusion in the right, coming up the long fissure and into the horizontal fissure.
“Reading” the Chest X-ray

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Note the posterior meniscus of effusion
When to order other X-ray studies

- Lateral film
- Apical Lordotic
- Lateral decubitus
- Expiratory film
- CAT scan
- PET scan

What have we accomplished?

- Learned the PIER mnemonic
- Learned the ABCDE method of reading the CXR
- Learned the major landmarks of the CXR
- Learned to distinguish infiltrates, cavities and pleural effusions on the CXR

Acknowledgements

- Reynard J. McDonald, MD, Medical Director, NJMS Global Tuberculosis Institute
Selected References

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Web sites

• www.med-ed.virginia.edu/courses/rad/cxr/index.html
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• Rad.usuhs.mil/rad/chest_review/index.html