

Chapter 3

Principles of Red flags

As a student you will be expected to identify the presence of red flags during the clinical consultation, either during case history taking or later on when examining the patient.

What are 'red flags'?

These are signs or symptoms which either in their own on within the context of a clinic presentation may signify a condition which may require urgent referral or treatment.

Examples of red flags in isolation

- A. Systolic Blood pressure in excess of 180.
- B. Vomiting of blood.
- C. Persistent loss of sensation affected a limb.
- D. Presence of more than 10 spider naevi in the upper part of the body.

Red flags within a clinical context

- A. Systolic Blood pressure in excess of 140 in a patient with diabetes and with high cholesterol.
- B. Frank blood in the stools without the presence of haemorrhoids or anal tears.
- C. Intermittent loss of sensation affecting several parts of the body and muscle weakness.
- D. Several spider naevi and visible abdominal veins (Caput Medusae).

Some red flags may indicate pathologies relating to a particular organ or system whilst others are considered as non-system specific and can therefore implicate a diverse range of structures and their functions. The following tables provide a list of some of the most significant red flags. Attempt to complete these tables by identifying potentially serious conditions for each 'red flag', either when seen in isolation or within a broader clinical context.

References, Bibliography and Recommended reading

Jamison J R (2007), Differential Diagnosis for primary Practice, 2nd edn., Churchill Livingstone. (ISBN-13: 978-0443102875)

Goodman C G, Snyder T K (2007), Differential Diagnosis for Physical Therapists: Screening for Referral, 4th edn, Saunders. (ISBN: 978-0721606194)

Seller R H, Differential Diagnosis of Common Complaints, Saunders, 3rd edn, 1996 ISBN: 978-1416029069

Beck R, et al (2003), Tutorials in Differential Diagnosis, 4th edn., Churchill Livingstone. ISBN: 978-04430615-7-8

DVD-VIDEO recordings

Syrimis A (2007), Clinical Examinations DVDs, Bloomsbury Educational Ltd,

ISBNs:

- Respiratory system examination: 978-0-9551291-0-0
- General system examination: 978-0-9551291-1-7
- Cardiovascular system examination: 978-0-9551291-2-4
- Abdominal system examination: 978-0-9551291-3-1
- Peripheral nervous system examination: 978-0-9551291-4-8
- Cranial nerves examination: 978-0-9551291-5-5
- Musculoskeletal examination: 978-0-9551291-6-2
- Case History Taking: 978-0-9551291-7-9
- Clinical Examinations: Complete DVD series: 978-0-9551291-9-3

<http://www.clinicalexams.co.uk/student-resources-section.htm>

(For additional lecture notes, Q&As and images, Username & Password provided in class)

Boon N A, Colledge N R, Walker, B & Hunter J A A (2006), Davidson's Principles and Practice of Medicine. 20th Edition, Churchill Livingstone ISBN: 978-0-4430703-5-8

Bickley, L. S.; Szilagyi, P. G.; 2003; ***Bates' Guide to Physical Examination and History Taking***; (8th Ed); Lippincott; New York.

Epstein, O.; et al.; 1997; *Clinical Examination*; (2nd Ed.); Mosby; London. (similar to Bates but presents the information in a different but equally good way. Some very good photographs and is user friendly).

Marsh J; 1999 *History and Examination*; Mosby London. (a great 'crash course' book with sample questions. Very user friendly. I recommend it).

Forbes, C. D.; Jackson, W. F.; 1998; *Color Atlas and Test of Clinical Medicine*; (2nd Ed.); Mosby; London. Excellent reference book for photographs of various pathologies.

Haslett, C.; et al.; 1999; *Davidson's Principles and Practice of Medicine*; (18th Ed.); Churchill Livingstone; Edinburgh. (Use to put your clinical findings into context of general medicine).

Bradley J, Rubenstein D, Wayne D, The Clinical Manual, Blackwell Scientific publications. ISBN 0-632-03312-6. This is another very good pocket size book but you may have to order it. I find this book very useful because it also had a summary of the main pathologies and their signs and symptoms.