Red flags in medicine

Collected by Dr / Mahmoud Labib Salim

Dyspepsia

- Dysphagia
- Persistent vomiting
- unexplained weight loss
- Iron-deficiency anaemia
- Progressive difficulty swallowing
- Epigastric pain and/or mass
- Gastrointestinal bleeding
- Unexplained and persistent dyspepsia in patients over 55 years of age.
- Previous peptic ulcer.

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Dysphagia

RED_FLAGS

- Progressive painless dysphagia (especially in older patients)
- Haematemesis
- Past history of cancer
- Slow passage of food or fluids
- Systemic symptoms:

- weight loss
- night sweats or fever

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Upper_gastrointestinal_bleeding

RED_FLAGS

- Tachycardia; postural hypotension
- Melaena
- Dysphagia
- Epigastric mass
- Jaundice and other signs of CLD
- Persistent epigastric pain
- Persistent vomiting
- Iron-deficiency anaemia
- Systemic symptoms:
    - weight loss
    - fever
    - anorexia

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Diarrhoea

RED_FLAGS

- Systemic symptoms:
    - unintentional weight loss
    - fever, anorexia, fatigue
    - malaise, sweats
- Persistent change in bowel habit
- Rectal bleeding
- Dehydration
- High fever
- Nocturnal diarrhoea
- Abdominal pain
- Pus or blood mixed with the stool
- Severe vomiting and sweating
- Iron-deficiency anaemia

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Abdominal_pain

RED_FLAGS

- Systemic features:
    - unintentional weight loss
    - fever,sweats
    - anorexia, malaise
- Rectal bleeding or haematemesis

- Anaemia
- Change in bowel habit in patient aged >50 years
- Abdominal mass
- Rectal mass
- Raised inflammatory markers
- Pregnancy
- Known abdominal aortic aneurysm
- Past or family history of cancer.

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Suspected_bowel_cancer

RED_FLAGS

- Unexplained rectal bleeding with change in bowel habit without anal symptoms in patients aged >40 years
- Any rectal bleeding in people aged >60 years
- Persistent (>6 weeks) change in bowel habit to looser stools in people aged >60 years
- Unexplained iron-deficiency anaemia
- Systemic symptoms:
    - weight loss
    - Anorexia , sweats
    - malaise; fatigue
- Palpable right-sided lower abdominal mass

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Constipation

RED_FLAGS

- Systemic symptoms
  - unexplained weight loss
  - fatigue,malaise
  - sweats, fever
- New onset constipation in older people
- Tenesmus
- Rectal bleeding
- Anaemia

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Nausea_vomiting

RED_FLAGS

- Prolonged or severe vomiting
- Haematemesis
- Head injury
- Papilloedema
- Rash and fever (meningitis)
- Dehydration
- Systemic symptoms:
  - weight loss

- malaise, fatigue
- sweats, fever

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Sore_throat

RED_FLAGS

- General symptoms:
  - weight loss, malaise
  - night sweats، fever)
- Possibility of sexually transmitted infection (STI)
- Immunosuppression from infection(HIV)

  or from drugs such as steroids
- Patient systemically unwell
- Unilateral peritonsillitis and peritonsillar abscess
- History of rheumatic fever
- Stridor
- Swallowing problems
- Difficulty breathing
- Dehydration
- > 5 episodes in the past 12 months

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Irritable_bowel_syndrome

- Change in bowel habit if aged >40 years

- Rectal bleeding
- Weight loss
- Systemic symptoms; anorexia, fevers, sweats
- Nocturnal diarrhoea
- Microcytic anaemia
- Recurrent vomiting
- Atypical presentation

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Inflammatory_bowel_disease

RED_FLAGS

- Bloody diarrhoea >6 day.
- Significant weight loss or fatigue
- Significant abdominal swelling or pain
- Failure to respond to treatment
- Fever and signs of systemic illness
- Chronic persistent colitis

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Chest_pain

RED_FLAGS

- Pain not relieved with nitrates.
- Pain on exercise.
- Nausea, vomiting and sweating.

- Severe pain and distress
- Pallor
- Tachycardia
- Tachypnoea
- Collapse
- Syncope

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Suspected_lung_cancer

RED_FLAGS

- Persistent cough +/- breathlessness for >2 weeks without obvious cause.
- Persistent systemic symptoms:
  - unexplained weight loss
  - fatigue ؛malaise
  - loss of appetite
- Loss of desire for cigarettes
- Persistent haemoptysis
- Stridor
- Symptoms or signs suggesting metastasis (bone, liver, brain)
- Neck or facial swelling
- Dysphagia

- Hoarseness
- Cervical or supraclavicular lymphadenopathy
- Chest X-ray suggesting:
    - pleural effusion
    - mediastinal mass
    - any suspicious lung pathology

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Chronic_obstructive_pulmonary_disease

RED_FLAGS

- Shortness of breath at rest or with minimal exertion
- Haemoptysis
- Weight loss
- Raised JVP
- Oedema
- Cor pulmonale
- Hypoxia
- Severely reduced exercise tolerance
- Depression
- Need for
    - oxygen therapy
    - pulmonary rehabilitation
    - or surgery

- Under 40 years of age or family history of alpha-1 antitrypsin deficiency
- Rapid decline in FEV1

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Pulmonary_embolism

- Altered level of consciousness
- Haemoptysis
- Systolic blood pressure <90 mmHg
- Heart rate >130 beats per minute
- Respiratory rate >25 breaths per minute
- Oxygen saturation <91% -
- Temperature
- Presence of risk factors for of thromboembolism
- An alternative diagnosis, such as
  - another respiratory condition (e.g.pneumothorax, pneumonia
    acute exacerbation of COPD
  - cardiac cause (e.g. acute coronary syndrome, acute congestive heart failure ; dissecting aortic aneurysm, pericarditis)
  - musculoskeletal chest pain,
  - gastrooesophageal reflux disease
  - or any cause of collapse.

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Shortness_of_breath

RED_FLAGS

- Tachypnoea
- Tachycardia
- Tracheal deviation
- Stridor
- Cyanosis
- Hypoxia
- Hypotension
- Confusion
- Use of accessory muscles
- Effortful breathing without effective air movement ('silent chest')

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Pleural_effusion

RED_FLAGS

- Severe breathlessness
- Systemic symptoms such as:
  fever, night sweats and weight loss
- Past history of malignancy
- Risk factors for thromboembolism

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Asthma

RED_FLAGS

- Inability to talk in full sentences
- Tachycardia
- Tachypnoea
- Severely reduced peak flow (<50%)
- Cyanosis
- Silent chest
- Hypotension
- Bradycardia
- Confusion

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Haemoptysis

RED_FLAGS

- Severe blood loss
- Tachycardia
- Postural hypotension
- Systemic features: weight loss
  fever and sweats

🔥Features suggestive of cancer

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Iron_deficiency_anaemia

🔥Iron-deficiency anaemia in old men

🔥Iron deficiency in postmenopausal women

🔥Failure to respond to treatment with oral iron

🔥Weight loss, malaise, fever and sweats

🔥Worsening or new symptoms

🔥Gastrointestinal symptoms

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Peripheral_vascular_disease

RED_FLAGS

🔥Features of acute limb ischaemia

#such_as 🧨rest pain

🧨pallor

🧨pulselessness,

🧨paraesthesia

🧨paralysis

🔥Suspected abdominal aortic aneurysm

🔥Severe intermittent claudication

- Skin cyanosis
- Muscle tenderness

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Bleeding_disorders

RED_FLAGS

- Bruising over face, neck or trunk
- Petechiae +/- purpura
  on the extremities or trunk
- Bleeding from multiple sites
- Sepsis
- Fever
- Systemic symptoms:
  - weight loss
  - malaise, fatigue
  - fever, sweats

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Macrocytic_anaemia

RED_FLAGS

- Systemic features:
  - weight loss
  - fever, night sweats

- malaise, fatigue

- Psychiatric symptoms e.g. depression, delirium, dementia
- Neurological problems:
  - peripheral neuropathy
  - subacute degeneration of the cord
- Cardiac symptoms : chest pain, heart failure

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Heart_failure

RED_FLAGS

- Acute pulmonary oedema
- Worsening symptoms
- Increasing weight gain (fluid retention)
- Valve disease
- Chest pain
- Symptomatic arrhythmia
- Pregnancy
- Anaemia
- Treatment resistance

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Hypertension

RED_FLAGS

- Age <30 years

- 🔥Features suggesting a secondary cause
- 🔥Accelerated hypertension

  (blood pressure >180/110 mmHg

  with signs ofpapilloedema +/_retinal haemorrhage)
- 🔥Proteinuria
- 🔥Visual symptoms (e.g. pituitary tumour)
- 🔥Lack of response to treatment

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Atrial_fibrillation

RED_FLAGS

- 💥Acute chest pain (myocardial infarction)
- 💥Severe hypertension
- 💥New onset of heart failure
- 💥History of TIA or stroke

Palpitations

RED_FLAGS

- 💥Previous myocardial infarction
- 💥Abnormal ECG
- 💥Chest pain
- 💥Shortness of breath
- 💥Syncope
- 💥Signs of heart failure

- Heart rate over 140 beats per minute
- Abnormal physical examination

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Headache

- acute Severe persistent headache
- Sudden change in previously stable headache
- Early-morning headache
- Nausea and vomiting
- Fever
- Night-time awakening
- Non-blanching rash (meningitis)
- Recent head trauma (within past three months)
- Retro-orbital pain
- Neck stiffness
- Jaw claudication (temporal arteritis)
- Neurological findings:
    - hemiparesis
    - cranial nerve abnormalities
    - hemianaesthesia
    - drowsiness
- headache when bending over, laughing or straining

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Tremor

RED_FLAGS

- Disabling effect on daily life
- Suspected Parkinson's disease
- Alcohol or drug misuse
- Systemic features:
  - weight loss
  - malaise,anorexia
  - fever, night sweats
- Signs of raised intracranial pressure
- Additional neurological features

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Back_pain

RED_FLAGS

- Saddle anaesthesia
- progressive neurological deficit in the lower extremities
- Gait problems (e.g. foot drop)
- Loss of sexual function
- Bladder or bowel dysfunction
- Sudden onset of severe central pain

in the spine relieved by lying down

- Major trauma (e.g. road accident; fall from a height)
- Age >50 years or <20 years
- History of cancer
- Night-time pain disturbing sleep
- Constitutional symptoms:
    - fever, night sweats
    - unexplainedweight loss
- Immunosuppression

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Chronic_musculoskeletal_pain

RED_FLAGS

- Localising/focal neurological signs
- Signs of inflammatory arthritis or connective-tissue disease
- Signs of cardiorespiratory disease
- Unintentional weight loss
- Lymphadenopathy

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Sudden_painless_visual_disturbance

- Loss of vision, in association with previous flashes and floaters
- Sudden loss of central visual acuity only
- Sudden loss of vision associated with features of temporal

arteritis

- Missing area of vision (scotoma)
- Severe floaters and flashes
- Dark curtain in the periphery of vision
- Sudden onset of double vision with pain, ptosis and a dilated pupil
- Signs of infection (e.g. meningitis)

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Acute_red_eye

RED_FLAGS

- Visual loss
- Severe pain
- Photophobia
- Coloured halos around points of light
- Corneal opacity
- Suspected acute glaucoma
- Suspected temporal arteritis
- Deep foreign bodies in the cornea
- Smaller pupil in the affected eye

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Hirsutism_in_women

RED_FLAGS

- Systemic symptoms suggestive of malignancy
- Sudden onset and rapid progression of hair growth
- Raised testosterone levels
- Signs of virilisation:
    - hair loss from the scalp
    - voice deepening,
    - increased muscle bulk
    - clitoromegaly
- Pelvic or abdominal mass
- Features of Cushing's syndrome:
    - weight gain (moon face),
    - weightgain in the neck
    - stretch marks,
    - easy bruising
    - proximalmuscle weakness

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Diabetes_review

RED_FLAGS

- cerebrovascular disease
- hypertension
- peripheral vascular disease
- diabetic retinopathy
- diabetic nephropathy
- Skin and soft-tissue infections
- Recurrent urinary tract infections
- Peripheral neuropathy
- Foot ulcers
- Diabetic ketoacidosis

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Amenorrhoea

RED_FLAGS

- Virilisation
- Delayed puberty
- Adolescent over 16 years of age (primary amenorrhoea)
- No obvious underlying cause
- Hyperprolactinaemia
- Suspected premature ovarian failure
  with confirmatory raised FSH
- Weight loss, malaise, fever or anorexia

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Hyperthyroidism

RED_FLAGS

- 🔥Tracheal compression due to thyroid swelling
- 🔥Solitary nodule increasing in size
- 🔥Unexplained hoarseness of voice
- 🔥Cervical lymphadenopathy
- 🔥Symptoms in children or older patients (>65 years)
- 🔥Family history of endocrine tumour
- 🔥Thyrotoxic crisis

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Hypothyroidism

RED_FLAGS

- 🔥Depression
- 🔥Pregnancy
- 🔥Onset postpartum
- 🔥Treatment with amiodarone or lithium
- 🔥Evidence of pituitary disease (low TSH and T4)
- 🔥Coexisting CVD

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Obesity

RED_FLAGS

- 🔥Morbid obesity

- 🔥Severely reduced mobility
- 🔥Suicidal ideation
- 🔥Poor self-image
- 🔥Diabetes
- 🔥Cardiovascular complications

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Groin_pain

RED_FLAGS

- 🔥Severe pain think strangulated or incarcerated hernia.
- 🔥Testicular pain (torsion)🚩🚩🚩🚩🚩
- 🔥Past history of cancer
- 🔥Systemic features:
    - 🏷️fever, sweats

- weight loss
- malaise, fatigue

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Urethral_discharge_in_men

RED_FLAGS

- Systemic features
- Arthritis
- Fertility problems
- Testicular pain
- Exposure to HIV

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Renal_or_ureteric_colic

RED_FLAGS

- Urinary tract Infection
- Urinary tract obstruction especially in a solitary kidney or transplanted kidney
- Urosepsis
- Dehydration
- Intractable pain and/or vomiting
- Impending acute renal failure
- Bilateral obstructing stones

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Haematuria

RED_FLAGS

- Frank haematuria
- Past history of cancer
- Systemic features:
  - weight loss
  - fever,night sweats
  - malaise, fatigue
- Lower back pain
- Bone pain

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Lower_urinary_tract_symptoms_in_men

RED_FLAGS

- Persistent microscopic or macroscopic haematuria
- chronic Pelvic pain
- Systemic symptoms:
  - fever, weight loss and night sweats
- Bone pain
- Urinary Incontinence
- Unexplained erectile dysfunction
- Persistent dysuria with negative cultures

- Persistent sterile pyuria
- recurrent urinary infections
- Abnormal rectal examination
- Raised prostate-specific antigen (PSA)

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Hearing_loss_in_adults

RED_FLAGS

- Neurological symptoms
- Rapid onset (<72 hours)
- Progressive unilateral hearing loss and tinnitus
- Onset after trauma
- CSF otorrhoea
- Increasing pain
- Persistent offensive discharge

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Neck__swelling

RED_FLAGS

- Persistent unexplained swellings (>3 weeks)
- Persistent sore throat
- Unilateral unexplained pain in head ;neck For > 4 weeks
  associated with ear ache but normal otoscopy
- Persistent mouth ulcers

- Red and white patches of oral mucosa
- Systemic symptoms:
    - fever, night sweats
    - malaise
    - weight loss

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Ear_pain

RED_FLAGS

- Only one hearing ear
- Vertigo
- Hoarseness
- Dysphagia
- Facial weakness
- Meningism
- Persistent discharge, perforation
- Recurrent attacks of otitis media in adults

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Hyponatraemia

RED_FLAGS

- Rapid development of hyponatraemia
- History of cancer

- Confusion
- Deteriorating clinical state and signs of hypovolaemia
- Suspected SIADH or other endocrine cause
- Infants
- Elderly

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Hypernatraemia

RED_FLAGS

- Plasma sodium concentrations above 158–160 mmol/l
- Lack of thirst sensation
- Altered mental status

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Hypocalcaemia

RED_FLAGS

- Very low calcium levels (<7.5 mg/dl)
- Neurological signs
- Confusion
- Fits
- History of malignancy

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Hypokalaemia

RED_FLAGS

- Severe hypokalaemia (<2.5 mmol/l)

  is associated with life-threatening arrythmias
- Rapidly developing hypokalaemia
- Lack of response to treatment
- Ileus
- History of CVD
- Digoxin toxicity
- ECG changes
  - flat T-waves
  - U-waves
  - ST segment depression

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Hyperkalaemia

RED_FLAGS

- ECG changes
  - peaked T-waves
  - prolonged PR interval
  - widening of the QRS complex
- Arrhythmias
- Bradycardia
- Myopathy

- Paralysis
- Raised serum urea
- Acute or chronic renal failure
- Diabetic ketoacidosis

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Hypercalcaemia

RED_FLAGS

- Serum calcium >12mg/dl
- Pancreatitis
- Vomiting
- Dehydration
- Kidney stones
- Renal impairment
- Back pain
- Breast lump
- Change in bowel habit
- Haematuria
- Systemic features suggesting malignancy
    - weight loss
    - malaise, fatigue
    - sweats, fever