An unusual cause of hip pain

A 39-year-old woman presented with dull aching pain in the left hip for 6 months. The pain increased on squatting. There were no other associated features. She had had a hysterectomy 5 years earlier for uterine fibroids. Examination did not reveal any swelling or tenderness around the joint and movements of the left hip joint and the spine were normal. Abdominal examination was normal. Her erythrocyte sedimentation rate was 30 mm in the first hour and C-reactive protein levels were normal. A plain X-ray of the pelvis revealed a retained artery forceps with its tip towards the left hip joint. Following surgical removal of the forceps, the patient’s symptoms disappeared. This patient is unique as she presented with hip pain as the only manifestation of an intra-abdominal foreign body. If a magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scan had been done for the cause of her pain it could have been disastrous in this patient.

Retained surgical instruments are an unusual iatrogenic complication and can be prevented by routine counting of surgical instruments after surgery.

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