

## **Impact of user fees in health**

### **Abstract:**

**OBJECTIVE:** To determine the local aetiological spectrum of surgically relevant causes of abdominal pain. **DESIGN:** A prospective descriptive study was carried out. **SETTING:** Kenyatta National Hospital, Nairobi, Kenya during the month of October 2002. **SUBJECTS:** Patients aged 13 years and older presenting to the casualty department with abdominal pain were followed through the hospital system to determine whether they would undergo laparotomy and, in those cases who underwent laparotomy, to determine the nature of the pathology found at laparotomy. **RESULTS:** Abdominal pain was a presenting complaint in 1557 (16.7%) of patients presenting to the casualty department during the study period. Abdominal pain accounted for 17.9% (398 out of 2225 patients) of all admissions via the casualty department. Laparotomy was performed on 68 (4.4%) of patients who presented with abdominal pain to the casualty department. In female patients presenting with abdominal pain, the incidence of ectopic pregnancy and acute appendicitis was 65.3% and 16.3% respectively. The incidence of neoplasia found at laparotomy, for abdominal pain, on patients admitted to the general surgical ward was 3.0%. The incidence of neoplasia, as a cause of abdominal pain resulting in laparotomy was 3.3%. **CONCLUSION:** The results highlight the fact, with respects to abdominal pain, that there are significant differences between the disease patterns in different geographical locations. Assuming the converse could adversely affect the management of patients with abdominal pain locally.