Penetrating chest trauma: radiological appearances

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A 46-year-old man stabbed himself with a knife. While he was stable, frontal and lateral chest radiographs were obtained (Fig. 1). Following a cardiac arrest, emergency sternotomy and cardiopulmonary bypass were performed. The acute margins of the heart and diaphragm were lacerated. The knife passed 5 mm posteromedial to the inferior vena cava (Fig. 2). Recovery was uneventful.

Figure 1: Frontal and lateral chest radiographs taken in the resuscitation room.

Figure 2: Intraoperative photograph after the emergency sternotomy and cardiopulmonary bypass.