

Medical Image of the Week: Fat Embolism Syndrome

A 33-year-old man presented to the emergency department with shortness of breath and hemoptysis. He was discharged two days prior after hospitalization for a motor vehicle accident, in which he suffered a fracture of the shaft of the right femur. He had undergone open reduction and internal fixation of the fracture four days prior to this admission. He had diffuse parenchymal disease on his admission chest x-ray. A CT scan of the chest demonstrated multilobar ground glass opacities (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Thoracic CT scan showing ground glass opacities.

Bronchoscopy demonstrated progressively bloody BAL aliquots in two different lobes, consistent with diffuse alveolar hemorrhage (DAH). His workup for other etiologies was negative, and he was given a diagnosis of DAH secondary to fat embolism syndrome.

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