

Back ache

In a patient presenting to the department with back pain

What features in the history might raise suspicion of cancer? (2 marks)

*Onset > 50 or <17 yrs*

*Night pain*

*No improvement after 4-6 weeks*

*Weight loss*

*History of cancer*

What features might suggest Cauda equina syndrome? (2 marks)

*Urinary incontinence or retention*

*Saddle anaesthesia*

*Decreased anal tone of faecal incontinence*

*Bilateral lower extremity weakness or numbness*

*Progressive neurological deficit*

What features might suggest vertebral fracture? (2 marks)

*Prolonged use of steroids*

*Mild trauma + age >50*

*Age > 70*

*History of osteoporosis*

*Recent significant trauma*

If these three were excluded, give the differential diagnosis for a 67yr old man presenting to the department with acute onset back pain (4 marks)

*AAA*

*Mechanical back pain*

*Lumbar disc protrusion*

*Infection*

