

□ Diagnostic Pitfall – Definition A diagnostic pitfall is a clinical situation or feature that can lead to a misdiagnosis, delayed diagnosis, or incorrect clinical assumption because it mimics, obscures, or distracts from the actual underlying disease. These pitfalls often result from:

Over-reliance on typical presentations

Failure to consider atypical or rare entities

Anchoring bias or premature closure

Misinterpretation of imaging or labs

They are critical to recognize because they often:

Delay appropriate treatment

Increase patient morbidity/mortality

Erode clinical confidence and decision-making quality

Examples:

Mistaking spontaneous intracranial hypotension for chronic subdural hematoma due to overlapping imaging findings

Interpreting ST-elevation in pericarditis as myocardial infarction

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