Unusual Situations

Perforated Cancer – Cecal and sigmoid carcinomas may present, although rare, as localized invading masses or contained perforations. This may lead to the formation of fistulas to adjacent organs such as the bladder or small bowel. When the perforated carcinoma is in the sigmoid, it may mimic the clinical presentation of diverticulitis.

Inflammatory Bowel Disease – Although diverticular disease is much more prevalent in the elderly population, it is important to remember that Crohn’s disease has a bimodal pattern of incidence, occurring both in young and elderly populations. Therefore, in patients with typical symptoms of diverticulitis but with chronic diarrhea, multiple areas of colon involvement, perianal disease, and/or fistulas there should be a high suspicion of Crohn’s disease with appropriate work-up to evaluate the possibility. This may avoid unnecessary and potentially harmful surgery. In addition, rectal bleeding should raise suspicion of inflammatory bowel disease, as well as ischemia or colorectal cancer.

References: