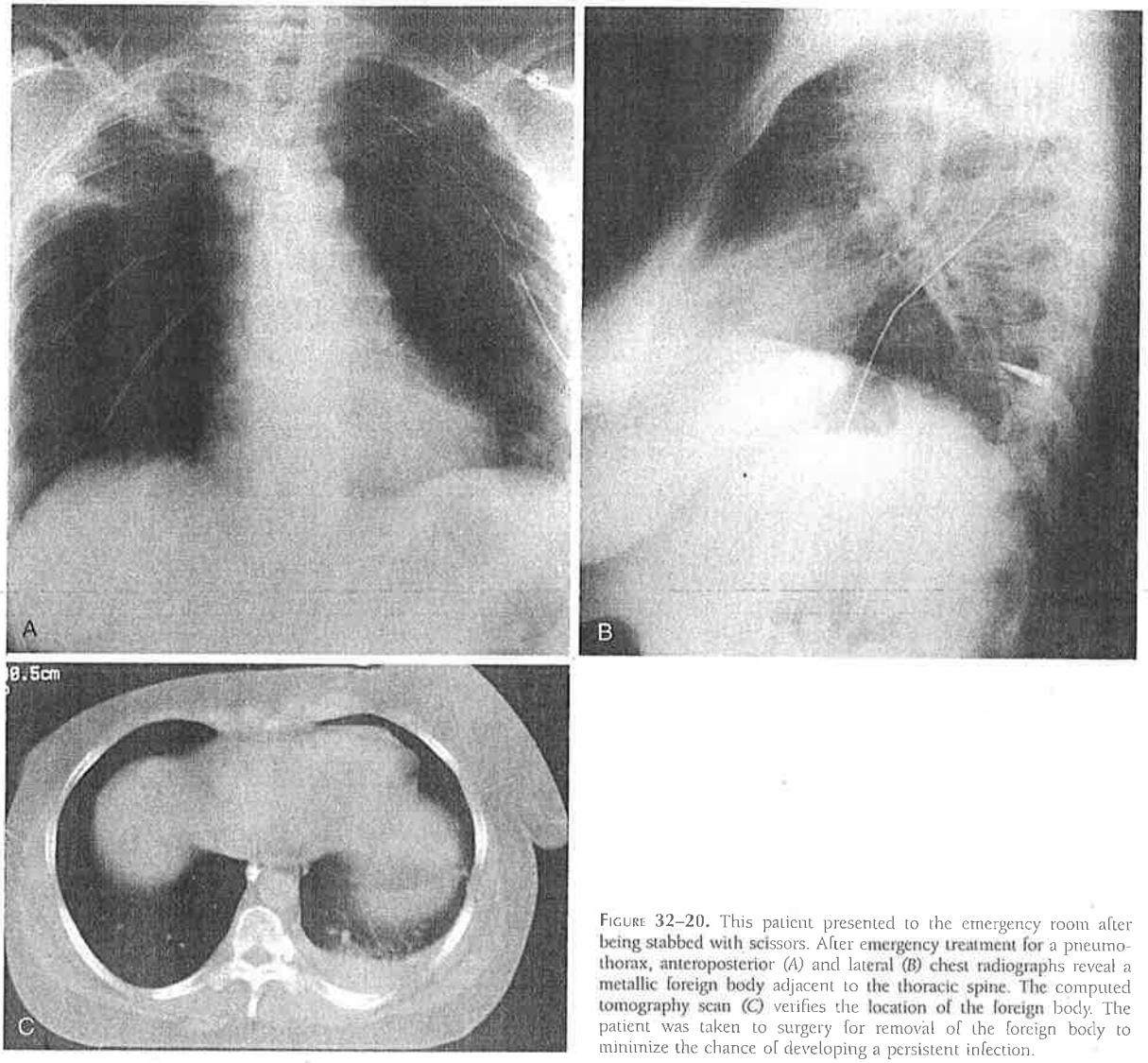

FIGURE 32–20. This patient presented to the emergency room after being stabbed with scissors. After emergency treatment for a pneumothorax, anteroposterior (*A*) and lateral (*B*) chest radiographs reveal a metallic foreign body adjacent to the thoracic spine. The computed tomography scan (*C*) verifies the location of the foreign body. The patient was taken to surgery for removal of the foreign body to minimize the chance of developing a persistent infection.

SUMMARY

The rising incidence of spinal cord injuries is caused by gunshot wounds of the spine, and physicians must become familiar with the evaluation and treatment of these patients. The importance of a good history, physical examination, and radiographic evaluation is emphasized. Most gunshot wounds of the spine can be treated nonoperatively, but it is important not to miss the rare injury that behaves clinically more like a typical war injury.

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