The diagnosis of rhabdomyolysis in the emergency department relies on clinical suspicion, urinalysis (myoglobinuria) and an elevated creatine phosphokinase (CPK) level. Some texts state that because AST and ALT are present in muscle, they may be elevated in patients with rhabdomyolysis.

Limitations
— Retrospective study, missing or incomplete data.
— Definitions: Rhabdo (Discharge diagnosis, CPK > 1000 U/L) — Elevated AST/ALT > 40 U/L
— Didn’t include non-rhabdo cases, unable to calculate specificity.
— Patients selected from a single hospital.
— Results may not apply to all populations.

Conclusion
AST was elevated more often and to a higher degree than ALT in patients with rhabdomyolysis.

Although the sensitivities were not sufficiently high to reliably exclude the diagnosis, an unexplained elevation of ALT or AST should raise the clinical suspicion of rhabdomyolysis in the proper setting.

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