ACUTE TRAUMATIC KNEE EFFUSION SUMMARY – Dr Andre Lui

1. Identify the mechanism of injury - can often make a diagnosis based on this alone
2. Identify how quickly the effusion develops - one that occurs over a few hours is a large hemarthrosis
3. An acute traumatic hemarthrosis is a patella dislocation/subluxation, fracture, or ACL/PCL injury
4. Get comfortable with identifying an effusion on physical exam
5. Use the cross table lateral x-ray to look for an effusion in the supra patellar space
6. A fat fluid level in the supra patellar space indicates that there is an underlying fracture
7. Look for other x-ray signs suggestive of major ligamentous injury - segond fracture, lateral femoral notch sign, tibial spine avulsion
8. Physical exam easiest to perform immediately after injury or a few weeks later once swelling settles
9. Special tests are highly user dependent - practice modifications and alternative tests

* Refer these patients for a repeat physical exam if unsure of the diagnosis