

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

## LESSONS FROM AN HISTORICAL MUSEUM OF ANATOMICAL PATHOLOGY: THORACO-ABDOMINOPAGUS FETUS

ROSA A.M.H. GOUVEIA<sup>1,2,3</sup>, TERESA FERREIRA<sup>2</sup>, LINA CARVALHO<sup>2,4</sup><sup>1</sup>Forensic Pathology, Instituto Nacional de Medicina Legal e Ciências Forenses, Coimbra, Portugal<sup>2</sup>Institute of Anatomical and Molecular Pathology (IAP-PM), Faculty of Medicine, University of Coimbra (FMUC), Coimbra, Portugal<sup>3</sup>CHLO – Hospital de Santa Cruz, Lisboa, Portugal<sup>4</sup>CHUC – University Hospital, Coimbra, Portugal

Historical Museums of Anatomical Pathology are a relevant teaching tool for medical undergraduate students and postgraduate residents. The visualization of real specimens allow a deeper comprehension of diseases, namely of rare conditions as in Teratology. This article emphasizes the need to preserve and use Universities Museums, by presenting a XIX<sup>th</sup> Thoraco-Abdominopagus Fetus.

**Key words:** conjoined twins, thoraco-abdominopagus fetus, historical anatomical pathology museum, medical teaching.

Conjoined twins are united by part or segments of the body and receive their name and known references depending on the macroscopic location of the union/fusion plus the word *pagus* (from the Greek word for “fixed”) [1, 2]. The majority of the reported cases correspond to *parapagus* (28%), presenting a united lower abdomen and pelvis, followed by *thoracopagus* (19%) – fusion of the thorax and abdominal wall until the umbilicus [3]. Having been recognized since antiquity [4], these cases are currently rare [1.5/100,000-1/500,000 live births, still with a female predominance (3♀ : 1♂)] due to medical diagnosis accuracy [2, 5].

The authors present a conjoined twins specimen from the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Fig. 1), preserved at the Teratology wing in our Museum of Anatomical Pathology, which dates from 1822 and is currently a UNESCO World Heritage site. Tutorial visits to the museum are included in the Pathology educational curriculum of the Faculty of Medicine. Like the publications of Paluchowski *et al.* [6] and Gulczyński *et al.* [7], this report aims to emphasize the pedagogic mission of historical collections kept in university museums



**Fig. 1.** Macroscopic view of an historical specimen of thoraco-abdominopagus conjoined twins, preserved in liquid fixative and showing internal habitus details, namely the shared organs – single heart and single liver

when preparing medical students or young residents for future clinico-pathological practice, namely in what concerns unusual nosologic entities and the understanding of congenital and/or molecular pathology/diseases, whose knowledge and preventive measures may avoid leading to final dramatic health situations as well as to patient-family suffering.

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## Address for correspondence

Rosa A.M.H. Gouveia  
Forensic Pathology  
Instituto Nacional de Medicina Legal e Ciências Forenses,  
Coimbra, Portugal  
e-mail: rhgouveia@mail.telepac.pt