

Two Heads Better Than One

BY

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At about 7.30 o'clock on the morning of 10th October, 1960, an African woman, far advanced in pregnancy, was admitted to Umtali African hospital.

She gave a history of having had one previous normal birth and on this occasion going into spontaneous labour about 24 hours prior to admission. Her membranes had ruptured during that morning, but as the day drew on her pains became less severe and in the evening they ceased. She had felt no movement for some hours before coming into hospital.

Examination shortly after she came in showed a young woman in good physical condition. A head could be palpated in the right upper quadrant and another hard round object, more fixed than the first one, was felt in the midline at the same level. The outline of a body could vaguely be made out running obliquely toward the left iliac fossa. No foetal heart was heard.

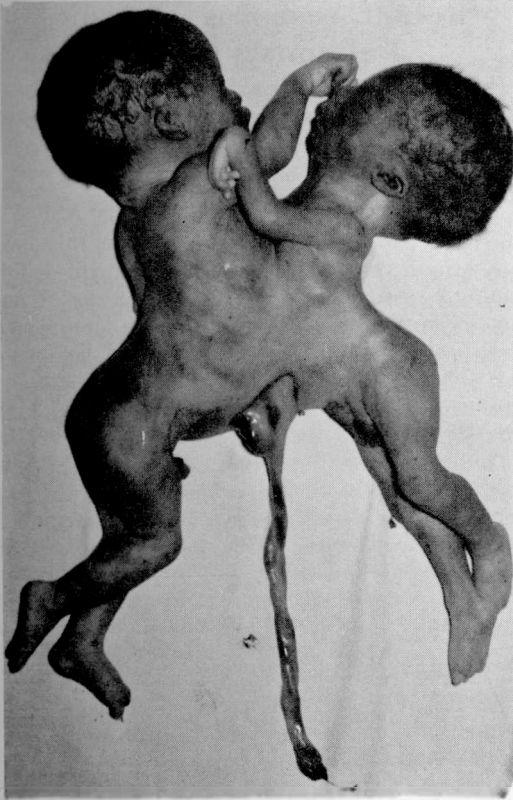


Fig. 1—Siamese twins



Fig. 2—Illustrating bilateral wrist deformities of smaller twin.

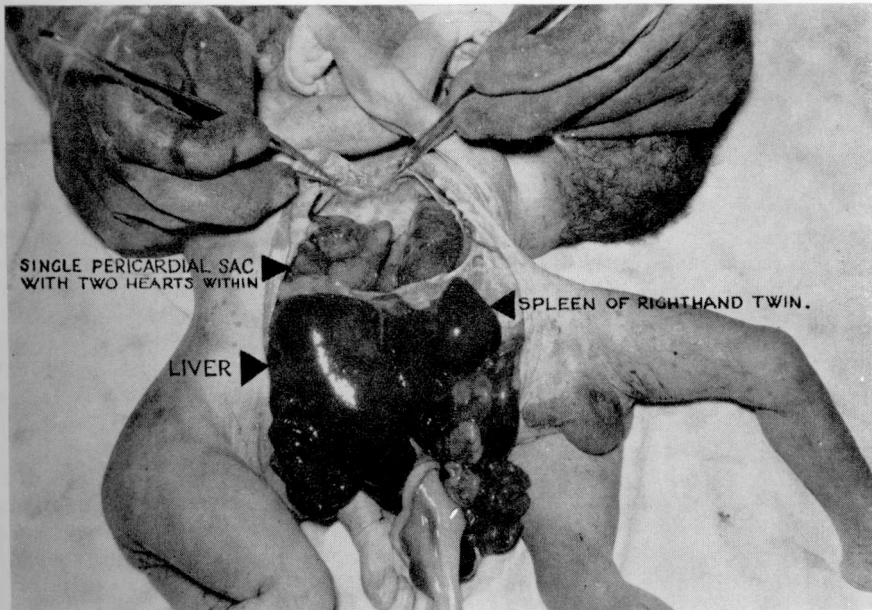


Fig. 3—Shows a single pericardial sac, within which two hearts are seen. The liver of the left-hand twin and the spleen of the right-hand one can be discerned.



Fig. 4—Siamese twins, Umtali African hospital, 10th October, 1960.

On vaginal examination, the cervix was between three and four fingers dilated, and a foot was projecting. Mild traction on this yielded no resulting advance.

A tentative diagnosis of foetal death *in utero* due to obstruction from fibroids was made, and it was deemed expedient to do a lower segment caesarean section—general anaesthetic provided by Dr. H. N. E. Wright.

The result of this is demonstrated in the accompanying photographs, taken by Mr. J. P. T. Coates Palgrave.

The lesser twin had bilateral flexion deformities of the wrist and was generally not as large or as well developed as the brother. On dissection of the junction it was found that there was but one liver, mainly sited in the predominant twin, and that there was a single pericardial cavity containing two hearts.

Acknowledgments

I am indebted to Dr. D. A. W. Rittey, Acting Director of Medical Services, and to Dr. J. Montgomery, Senior Government Medical Officer, Umtali, for permission to print this article.