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Sri Lankan study on morphology of the thoracic azygos venous system; a preliminary study

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The anatomical description of the azygos venous system is well known and its abnormalities are often reported. However, to the best of our knowledge there were no studies have been performed to find out variable patterns of the azygos venous system in Sri Lankan population. This knowledge is important in clinical practice as some of the anatomical variants have significant clinical implications for computed tomography image assessment and mediastinal surgery. Therefore, we decided to embark on a preliminary research study on the azygos venous system using thirteen cadavers. This study was aimed to find out common variations of the azygos venous system in Sri Lankan population. The most of the variants found in this particular study were described in standard textbooks. The commonest variation found in this series had right side intercostal veins draining separately to the azygos vein and the left tributaries drains via the accessory hemiazygos vein and the hemiazygos vein. These two veins had joined together and drain via a common route. This pattern was seen in 23% of the subjects. However, this study shows the azygos vein taking different positions in relation to the vertebral bodies in its course in the posterior mediastinum. There were variations of the level of origin and termination of the vein. The knowledge on the course and variation of the azygos system in the posterior mediastinum is essential for surgeries and clinical imaging. Therefore, further evaluation of this subject is very essential.