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**RETROAORTIC LEFT RENAL VEIN:
A PRELIMINARY STUDY OF CADAVERS**

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Anatomical variations of the left renal vein have been investigated and reported by anatomists as well as pathologists and surgeons for more than two centuries. Knowledge of such anatomical variations of the left renal vein is of extreme importance to the surgeon during surgical procedures involving the kidneys, abdominal aorta and retroperitoneal regions.

Usually, the left renal vein arising from the hilus of the left kidney pursues a preaortic course to empty into the inferior vena cava. Among the many variations that have been reported, the two major anomalies are the retroaortic left renal vein and the left circumaortic venous ring or the renal collar.

Numerous studies from different regions of the world have documented the incidence of variations of the left renal vein. As no such studies have been conducted in Sri Lanka, the present study was designed with the aim of identifying the incidence of left renal vein variations.

In a total of 67 (40 male and 27 female) dissected human cadavers, aged 52 to 93 years at the time of death, renal vein variations were examined and recorded. Among the 67 cadavers examined, 4 cases of retroaortic left renal vein were identified. In all other cadavers the left renal vein pursued a preaortic course. The circumaortic venous ring (renal collar) was not present in any of those cadavers. All retroaortic left renal veins were encountered in the male bodies.

According to the previous studies the left circumaortic venous ring seems to be a more frequent anomaly than the retroaortic left renal vein. In these studies an incidence of 2.4-16.8 % and 0.28-7.69% has been reported for the left circumaortic left renal vein and retroaortic left renal vein respectively. In the present study, the left renal vein was found to lie in a retroaortic position in 5.97% of cases indicating that it is a relatively frequent anomaly.