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Editorial

Theme and variations in the human body; implications

Theme and variations are a common musical structure that we come across in western classical music. A structure is built on a basic music idea called a *theme*, that is played at the beginning of a musical piece and thereafter consecutively *variations* from the theme are played. The process is repeated with the genesis of a *theme and variations*. Although a variation is different, it can still be traced back to the original theme in some way. Air and variations in Handel's Suite No. 5 in E major which is popularly known as the *Harmonious Blacksmith* is a popular example.

One can observe the phenomenon of *theme and variations* in nature and real-life situations. When we describe the classical structure of the human body, we also need to take cognizance of anatomical variations. These developmental variations are nuanced. They can range from a very minor variation to a major defect that is incompatible with life. The described body of anatomical variations is so very vast.

Implications of anatomical variations too are vast and variable. In modern obstetrics, focus on these variations commence well before the baby is born. We now see the genesis of the foetal medicine. Some of the significant anatomical variations and / or their effects are addressed *in utero* or after birth.

Ravindrakumar *et al.*, describe a case of ruptured appendix in a 10-year-old girl with situs inversus in this issue of *GMJ*. This paper describes the diagnostic dilemma in a patient who has been diagnosed with dextrocardia, but not investigated for transposed viscera associated with situs inversus at previous medical encounters. This calls for stringent vigilance for anatomical variations of significance in paediatric care.

Surgeons are group of clinicians who encounter anatomical variations at different points - preoperatively or sometimes unexpectedly during surgery. In an era with external and refined tools of assessment including imaging, a thorough preoperative assessment where relevant will lead to excellent surgical outcomes without unnecessary morbidity and mortality.

Themes and variations of the human anatomy have been so very well studied. Diagnostics and interventions commence antenatally and spans the entire life of an individual. Thorough and vigilant screening, diagnosis and interventions, where relevant are called for from clinicians across specialties.

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