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Monocardic two-headed conjoined twins.

Case report and pathological description.

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Introduction

One of the most interesting and at the same time complex conditions to deal with from a medical point of view in multiple pregnancies are the conjoined twins or “Siamese” twins. The incidence has been reported from 1 in 50,000 to 100,000, however, since 60% of cases die early in utero, the real incidence is approximately 1 in 200,000 and there is a greater predisposition in women with a 3:1 ratio.

Case

A 22-year-old Mexican primigravid patient with a maternal family history of type 2 diabetes mellitus. She reported folic acid and iron supplementation starting in the second trimester. An ultrasound at 18.4 weeks of gestation revealed an anteriorly duplicated, dicephalic, monocardic conjoined twin pregnancy. Both heads showed symmetrical bilateral ventriculomegaly and Arnold Chiari type II malformation. A single heart was seen in the thoracic cavity, with situs solitus, mesocardia, and levocardia. The ventricles were morphologically normal, and two arterial trunks emerged from the left ventricle, giving rise to the right and left brachiocephalic trunks. A single descending aorta, normal gastric chamber position and appearance, normal liver and gallbladder, two upper and two lower limbs, two kidneys, and one bladder were identified.

Due to the multiple malformations and poor prognosis, the pregnancy was terminated. Autopsy confirmed a two-headed fetus with spina bifida, two brains, fused spinal columns, four lungs (two fused), a single stomach, and one heart with two arterial trunks emerging from the left ventricle.

Conclusion

Physicians often face ethical dilemmas, and conjoined twins present unique challenges. Early in the diagnosis, deciding whether to continue or terminate the pregnancy can be difficult. Prognosis depends on the extent of shared organs—especially the heart—which influences the chances and outcomes of surgical separation.

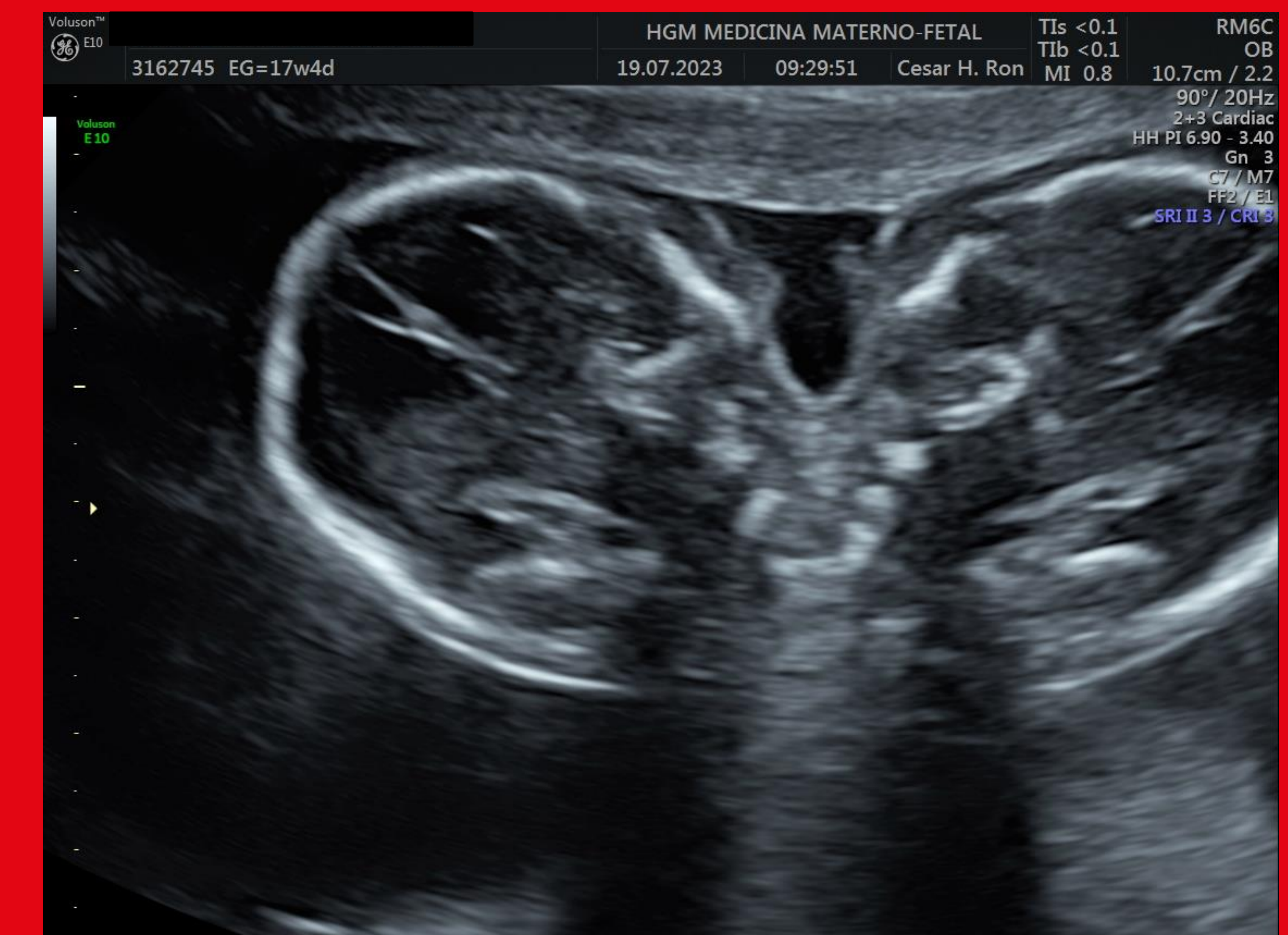


Figure 1. Ultrasound showing a coronal section with the image of two joined heads.

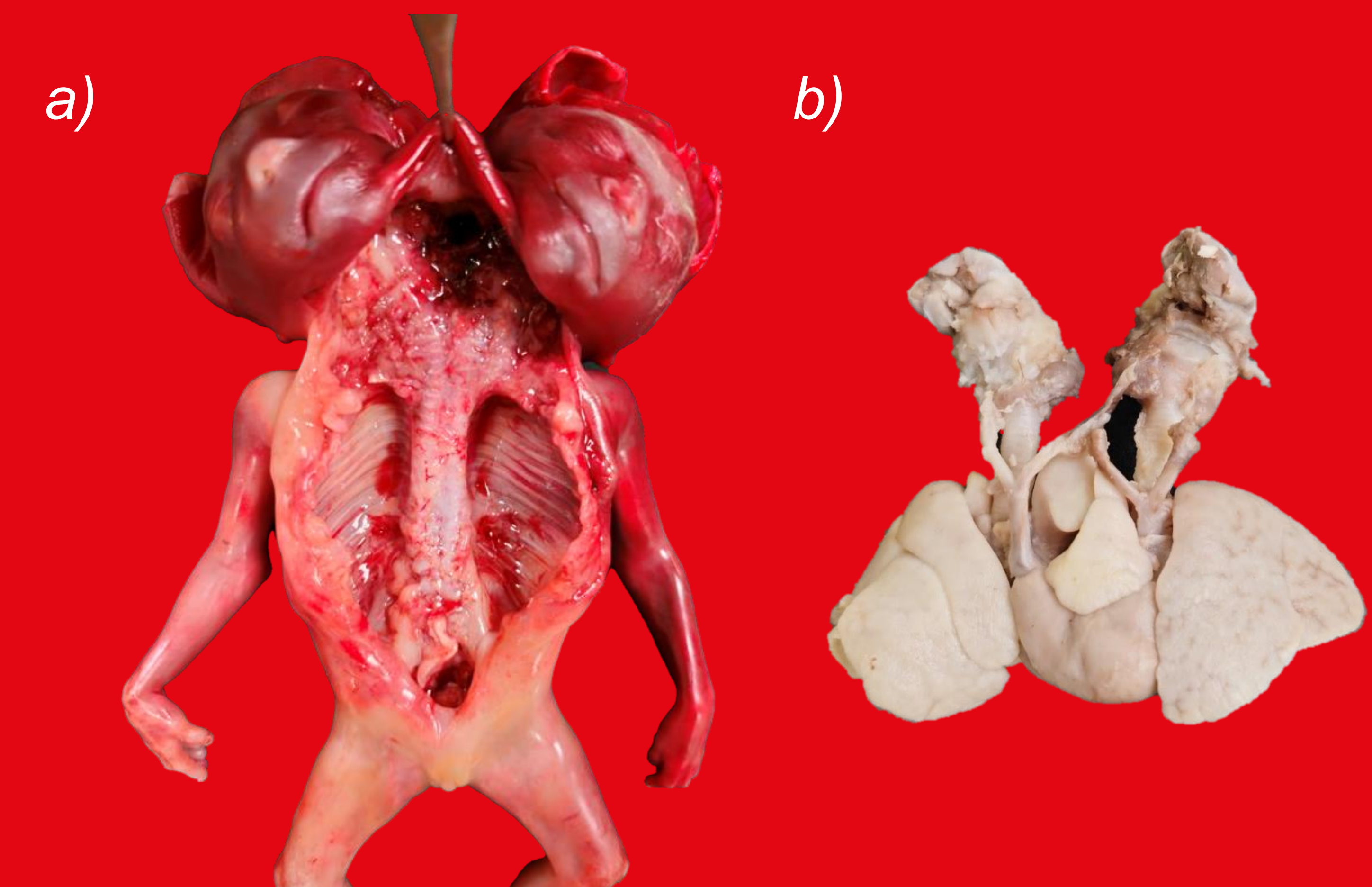


Figure 2. Autopsy