

## Medical Mystery — The Answer

**TO THE EDITOR:** The medical mystery in the January 2 issue<sup>1</sup> involved a 55-year-old man with a history of recurrent flank pain that was due to renal stone disease. A metabolic evaluation led to the discovery of distal renal tubular acidosis, and an abdominal radiograph (Fig. 1) showed numerous calcifications with a bizarre distribution on the left side. Retrograde pyelographic studies (Fig. 2) showed that the patient also had a malformation of the urinary tract called “crossed renal ectopy,” with the right kidney in a transverse position in the left paramedian space at the level of the L4 vertebra.

Paul Isenring, M.D., Ph.D.

Gérald Guay, M.D.

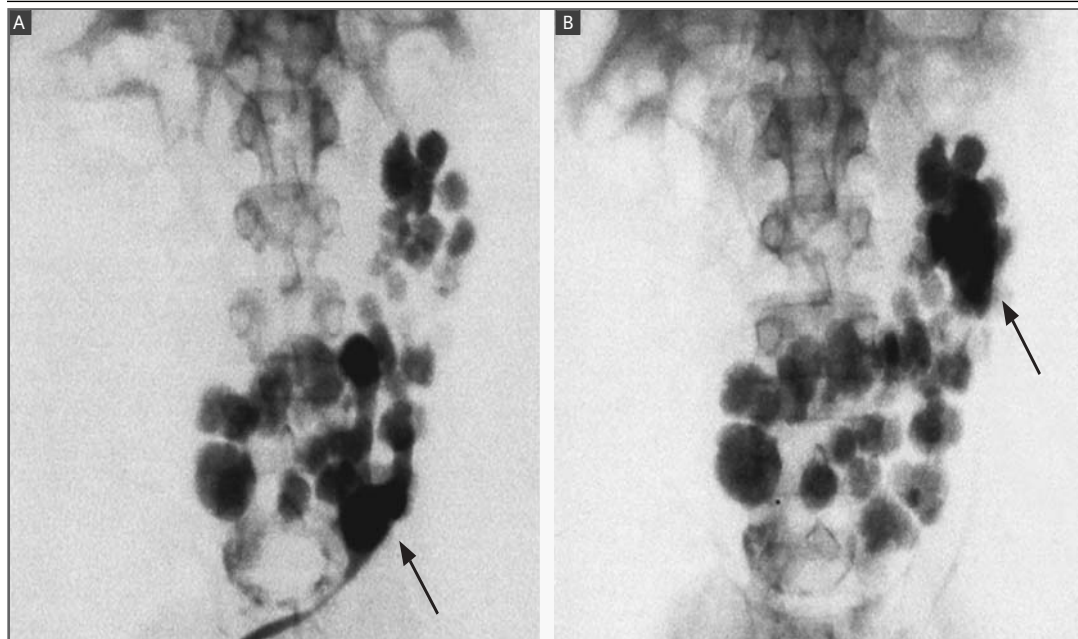
Hôtel-Dieu de Québec  
Québec, QC G1R 2J6, Canada

**Editor's note:** We received 156 responses to this medical mystery; 31 percent gave explanations that were consistent with the presence of nephrocalcinosis with a range of renal calcifications. Other responses provided explanations that included both the renal and gastrointestinal organ systems affected by physiologically calcified conditions. Ingested foreign bodies were proposed as the explanation in 14 percent of responses.

1. Isenring P, Guay G. A medical mystery. *N Engl J Med* 2003; 348:41.



**Figure 1.** Abdominal Radiograph Showing Nephrocalcinosis.



**Figure 2.** Retrograde Pyelographs of the Right (Panel A) and Left (Panel B) Collecting System, Showing Crossed Renal Ectopy. The right kidney is in a transverse position in front of the L4 vertebra. The pelvis of each kidney is indicated by an arrow.