

An unusual renal cyst

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Case presentation

A 35-year-old man presented to his doctor complaining of nonspecific abdominal pain. His clinical examination and laboratory testing were entirely normal.

The supine abdominal X-ray (Fig. 1) demonstrated an ill-defined focus of amorphous calcification overlying the left renal lower pole. The erect abdominal film (Fig. 2) demonstrated a fluid/calcium level overlying the left renal lower pole. Ultrasound examination demonstrated a 22 x 25 mm well-defined cyst, with acoustic shadowing, in the left renal lower pole cortex.

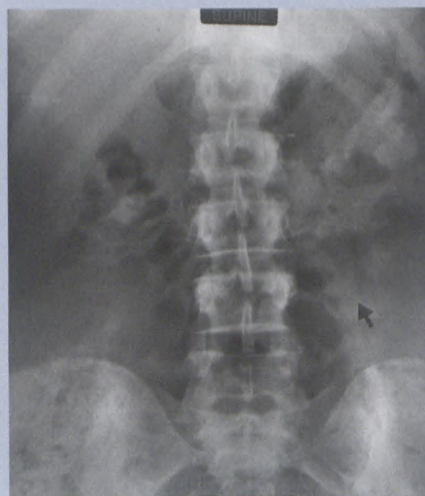


Fig. 1. Supine radiograph showing an ill-defined radio-opaque calcific focus overlying the left renal lower pole.

These findings are consistent with the diagnosis of milk of calcium cyst.

Discussion

Review of the major radiological textbooks reveals little reference to this entity in relation to the kidney. Milk of calcium stones are tiny calculi that are too small to be visualised radiographically as discrete entities, and appear as milky opacities that layer out dependently on upright or decubitus views.¹



Fig. 2. Erect radiograph showing dependent layering of calcium in the left renal lower pole.

Similar cysts may be found in the breast.² The aetiology of this configuration is unclear and may be secondary to previous infection or haemorrhage,³ or stasis.

The differential diagnosis includes residual Pantopaque used in cyst puncture³ — rarely performed today.

References

1. Sutton D, Young JWR. *A Concise Textbook of Clinical Imaging*. 2nd ed. Mosby, 1995: 653.
2. Granger RG, Allison DJ. *Diagnostic Radiology*. Edinburgh: Churchill Livingstone, 1997: 1377, 2005, 2011.
3. Dahnert W. *Radiology Review Manual*. 3rd ed. Baltimore: Williams and Wilkins, 1996: 644.