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**Original article:**

**Prevalence of Rectus sternalis: A Clinical Enigma**

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# Abstract:

**Background**: Rectus sternalis is an anatomical variant found in the anterior thoracic wall, familiar to anatomists but relatively unknown to clinicians. The situation of this muscle may be sternal or parasternal with wide variations in its superior and inferior attachments. Recent advances in imaging techniques have brought this muscle into clinical significance.

**Aims & Objectives**: The prevalence rate of Sternalis was estimated in the eastern delta region of Tamil Nadu by looking for rectus sternalis during routine dissection of thirty cadavers.

**Results**: Rectus sternalis was present in one male cadaver aged sixty years. The muscle was superficial to the fascia covering left Pectoralis major. The lower part of the muscle was fleshy and was observed to be arising from the upper part of rectus sheath and from 6th, 7th and 8th costal cartilages. The upper end of the muscle was tendinous and was inserted into the upper end of sternum and 3rd and 4th costal cartilages. The muscle measured 14 cms in length and 3.5 cms in breadth at the lower part. The prevalence of rectus sternalis in the present study was 3.3%.

**Discussion**:The reported prevalence of rectus sternalis is 4-8% in the cadaveric studies .Rectus sternalis is frequently associated with axial anomalies and abnormalities of Pectoralis major. Nerve supply from either the pectoral nerve or intercostal nerve determines its embryological origin from either Pectoralis or Rectus abdominis.

**Conclusion**:A clinician’s familiarity with this rectus sternalis muscle may avoid unnecessary invasive procedures and undue stress to the patient.

**Keywords**: rectus sternalis, supernumerary muscle, clinical significance.