

Country cardiograms case 63

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An 84-year-old man with dementia presents to his local emergency department after a nurse at his care home found him to have a heart rate in the 30s. The patient denied any clear cardiac symptoms but did feel nauseous and had an episode of emesis before being sent to the emergency department. His past medical history was most notable for an admission to hospital for pneumonia 2 weeks earlier. During this prior hospital stay, he was found to be in complete heart block with a junctional escape rhythm and thus underwent implan-

tation of a single-chamber pacemaker once his pneumonia cleared.

Physical examination during the current presentation showed that the patient was in no distress at rest. His heart rate was 35 beats/min and his blood pressure was 163/59 mm Hg. Initial cardiac laboratory investigations revealed normal results of serial determinations of troponin levels and that electrolyte levels were within the normal range. The patient's initial electrocardiogram (ECG) is shown in Fig. 1. What are the important findings on this ECG? What might the underlying cause of

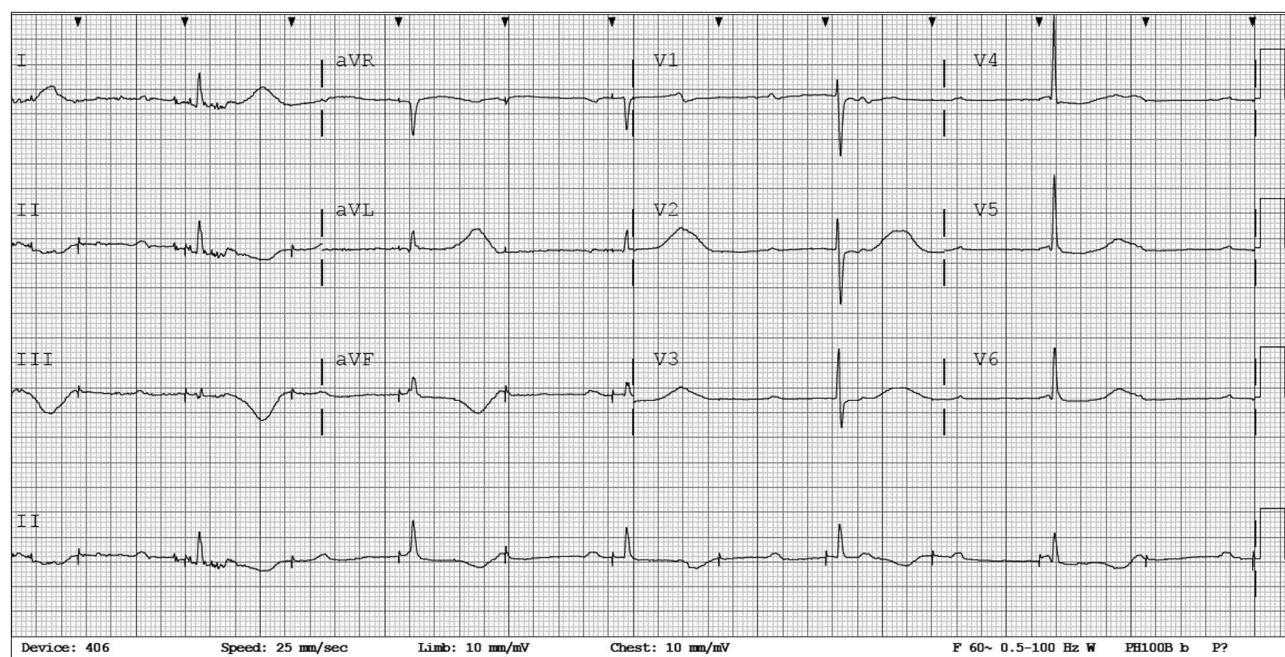


Fig. 1: Electrocardiogram of 84-year-old man with recently implanted single-chamber pacemaker.

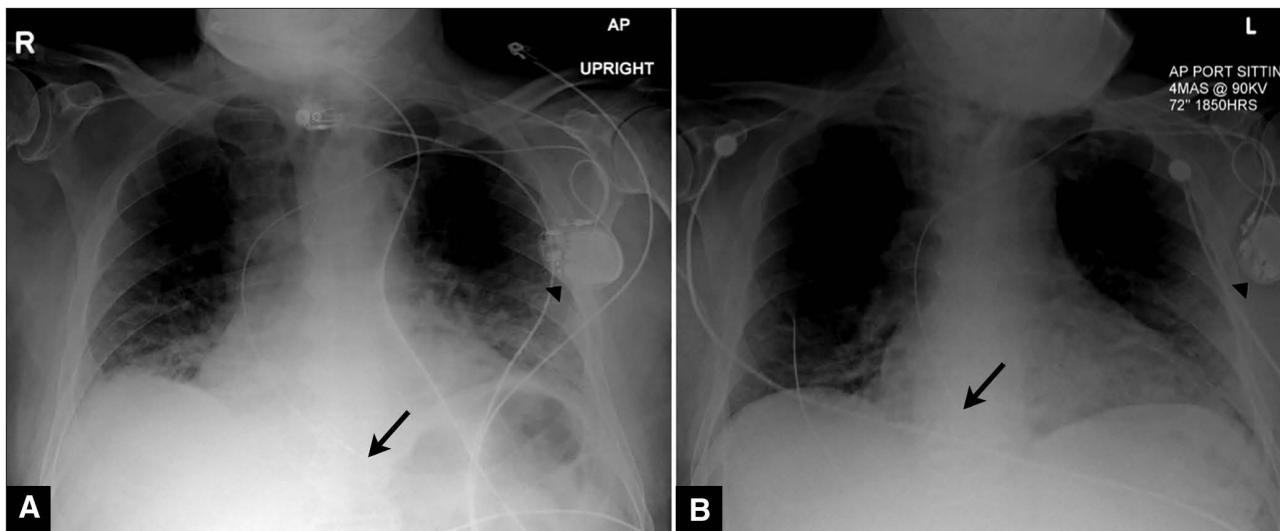


Fig. 2: Portable anteroposterior chest radiographs immediately following pacemaker implantation (A) and during current presentation, about 2 weeks later (B). The pacemaker generator is indicated by an arrowhead, and the tip of the pacemaker lead is indicated by an arrow.

the pacemaker malfunction be? Do the chest radiographs shown in Fig. 2 help you with the diagnosis?

For the answer, see page 91.

Competing interests: None declared.

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