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NODULAR GOITER AND LARYNGEAL ANATOMIC VARIANT IN TWO PORTRAITS OF THE HELLENISTIC DRAMATIST MENANDER

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These two marble sculptures (Figs.1a and 1b) dated to the Imperial Roman period portray the 2nd B.C. Greek Dramatist Menander, and are kept at the Chiaramonti Collection of the Vatican Museums in Rome and Uffizi Museum in Florence, respectively. Both display an anatomical variant of the thyroid cartilage, i.e. its protrusion on the midsagittal plane to give rise to the so called Adam's Apple. In particular, the lateral view of the Menander's head (Fig.1b) shows an acute angle of protrusion of 13° between the line tangential to the thyroid cartilage and that intersecting the most anterior projection of the cartilage, as in an adult population (1). This gender feature is due to raised pubertal androgens, growth hormone, and related cartilage growth factors in males. Since this anatomical evidence suggests that Menander really had a "*jug's spout*", we may assume that he also truly harbored the small goiter visible in both images and showing a likely isthmic nodule in the Uffizi's sculpture (Fig. 1b). Indeed, this latter piece of art is one of the eighty replicas of an original by Cephisodotos the Younger who was contemporary of Menander, and reproduced his real life appearance. Finally, goiter portraits (figures, coins) are found in ancient Greek art (2), supporting our belief the Menander might actually have had a nodular goiter.

Key words: nodular goiter, laryngeal prominence, anatomic variant

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Figure 1. a) Head of Menander. Marble, Roman copy of the Imperial era, Chiaramonti Collection, Vatican Museums, Rome, Italy, b) Marble Head of Menander, Roman copy of the Imperial era on modern bust (lateral view) Le Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence, Italy. Both sculptures are replicas after a Greek original (ca. 343 - 291 BC).

Compliance with ethical standards

Conflict of interest The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

Ethical approval This article does not contain any study involving human subjects or animal models.

Informed consent No informed consent is necessary.

