It sure looks like a heart

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The nuclear scan of a 66-year-old patient with a history of coronary artery disease was recently reviewed. There was an incidental but surprising finding (Figure 1A): the short-axis slices of the nuclear scan clearly depicted the symbolic heart shape (♥). This created interest because the heart generally has a classic round shape on nuclear scan short-axis slices (Figure 1B).

The heart symbol, which is drawn in a stylized shape as two semi-circles that terminate in a point, is widely recognized around the world. Although the symbol is deeply rooted in European art and folklore, the oldest known occurrence dates back to the Cro-Magnon era. The heart symbol often appears in red, suggesting blood. In

many cultures, the shape is particularly associated with romantic love, with its red colour emphasizing passion and strong emotion.

What the traditional 'heart shape' actually depicts is a matter of great controversy, with hypotheses ranging from an origin in astronomical observations to being a depiction of female reproductive anatomy. Some speculate that it actually depicts the heart of a cow, which would have been a relatively familiar sight to ancient civilizations; however, even bovine hearts only have a slight similarity to the iconic heart shape. While the finding in this patient has no particular scientific significance, it nevertheless demonstrates how unique and mysterious the human body and our world truly are.

Figure 1

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