Pentalogy of Cantrell is a rare disorder that is present at birth (congenital). Pentalogy of Cantrell is characterized by a combination of birth defects. These birth defects can potentially involve the breastbone (sternum), the muscle that separates the chest cavity from the abdomen and aids in breathing (diaphragm), the thin membrane that lines the heart (pericardium), the abdominal wall, and the heart. Pentalogy of Cantrell occurs with varying degrees of severity, potentially causing severe, life-threatening complications. Most infants do not develop all of the potential defects, which may be referred to as incomplete pentalogy of Cantrell. When all five defects are present, this is referred to as complete pentalogy of Cantrell. The variability of the disorder from one individual to another can be significant. The exact cause of pentalogy of Cantrell is unknown. Most cases are believed to occur sporadically. The exact cause of pentalogy of Cantrell is unknown. Most cases occur randomly for no apparent reason (sporadically). One theory suggests that the symptoms of pentalogy of Cantrell occur due to an abnormality in the development of midline embryonic tissue fourteen to eighteen days after conception. Several familial cases have been reported, and some researchers have suggested that genetic factors may play a role in the development of the disorder. More research is necessary to determine the exact, underlying cause(s) of pentalogy of Cantrell. Pentalogy of Cantrell affects males and females in equal numbers. The exact prevalence is unknown, but estimated to be 5.5 in 1 million live births. The symptoms of pentalogy of Cantrell are present at birth (congenital).