

Q Fever Endocarditis and a New Genotype of *Coxiella burnetii*, Greece

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Underdiagnosis of *Coxiella burnetii* infections in Greece is possible because of lack of awareness by physicians, and most suspected cases are in patients with no bovine contact. We found serologic evidence of *C. burnetii* infection throughout Greece and identified a new *C. burnetii* genotype in the aortic valve of a patient with Q fever endocarditis.

Q fever is a worldwide zoonosis caused by an obligate intracellular bacterium, *Coxiella burnetii* (1,2). Although the classification of *C. burnetii* by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (Atlanta, GA, USA) as a potential bioterrorism agent resulted in the disease becoming reportable in many countries (3), Q fever is not considered a public health problem in Greece, and few cases have been recorded (3).

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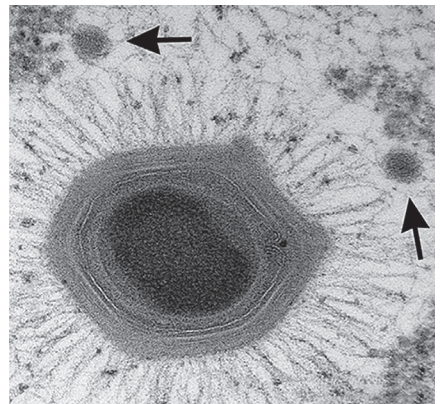
Mimivirus [mīm'ī-vī'rəs]

Clyde Partin

If virus (Latin: slimy) challenges the definition of what constitutes life, the DNA mimivirus tests how we define virus. This unidentifiable “bacterium” infecting *Acanthamoeba polyphaga*, was isolated in 1992 from a hospital cooling tower in Bradford, England. Thus, the original name was *Bradfordcoccus*, and it was considered a culprit for a pneumonia outbreak at this hospital.

Researchers brought samples to Didier Raoult and colleagues at Aix-Marseille University, who eventually identified this “bacterium” as a novel virus in 2003. The physical size, genomic content, and ability of the outer protein coat to stain gram positive, thus mimicking (Latin: imitate) prokaryotic bacteria, indicated that this pathogen might be a bacterium.

Raoult initially claimed that the moniker meant “mimicking microbe” but later sheepishly recounted a childhood memory about his father, a physician–scientist, who created stories to explain evolution. Featured prominently in these whimsical narratives was an anthropomorphic character named “Mimi the amoeba.”



Acanthamoeba polyphaga mimivirus, with two satellite Sputnik virophages (arrows). Thin-section electron microscopy courtesy of J.Y. Bou Khalil and B. La Scola, IHU Méditerranée Infection, France.

Sources

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