The diagnosis was Q fever endocarditis of a native aortic valve. Figure 1 in the photo quiz shows *Coxiella burnetii* as numerous small Gram-variable (Gram-negative as well as Gram-positive) coclobacilli. The diagnosis of *C. burnetii* endocarditis was established by positive PCR results for *C. burnetii* DNA from the cardiac valve tissue specimen and peripheral blood. A 16S rRNA sequence analysis of the same tissue specimen yielded a PCR product of approximately 900 bp and a sequence that was 99.9% identical to *C. burnetii* (GenBank accession number HM208383.1) over 775 bp. The serological test results were consistent with chronic *C. burnetii* infection, with titers for *C. burnetii*-specific antibodies as follows: a complement fixing antibody assay (CFA) titer of >10,240 (using *C. burnetii* phase II antigen; Virion/Serion GmbH, Wurzburg, Germany) and microscopic immunofluorescent antibody (IFA) assay titers of 2,048 for IgM anti-phase I, 65,536 for IgG anti-phase I, 4,096 for IgM anti-phase II, and 65,536 for IgG anti-phase II (Focus Diagnostics, Cypress, CA, USA). Long-term antibiotic treatment with doxycycline and hydroxychloroquine was initiated. Piperacillin-tazobactam was added to the regimen for *Bacteroides fragilis* bacteremia and for the uncultured Gram-negative bacilli in Gram stains of cardiac vegetations (3, 4). Two case reports of Q fever endocarditis describe the presence of *C. burnetii* in Gram-stained material (5, 6). Peptidoglycan layers in SCV are thicker than those from LCV and may therefore be harder to decolorize (7). Nevertheless, most reports and textbooks do not describe Gram stain for diagnosis of Q fever endocarditis, and if they do, they report that no bacteria could be visualized. In some cases, light microscopy revealed positivity by indirect immunofluorescent staining of cardiac tissues (8). Therefore, the sensitivity of the Gram stain for visualization of *C. burnetii* is possibly very low. In addition to poor staining properties, failure to observe *C. burnetii* in Gram-stained smears of cardiac valve tissue may be due to the small size of the bacterium, previous antibiotic treatment, and selection of unaffected parts of the valve for microscopy (sampling error). The presented case reconfirms that *C. burnetii* may be visualized in Gram stain preparations of infected cardiac valve tissue.

**REFERENCES**


