

# Image of the Month: A Giant, Free-Floating Left Atrial Ball Thrombus

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A 67-year-old woman, with a 19-year history of mitral valve replacement consequent to severe rheumatic mitral valvular stenosis, was admitted to the authors' hospital for a routine follow up visit. Although she had no complaints and no prior thromboembolic events, atrial fibrillation was identified. The patient had been shown to have received ineffective anticoagulation, since on admission her INR was 1.2. Transthoracic echocardiography revealed the presence of a free-floating ball thrombus (7.6×7.5 cm), which had an onion skin-like appearance, in a giant left atrium (13×9.5 cm)

(Fig. 1), and a normally functioning prosthetic valve. A free-floating ball thrombus is a very rare entity in patients with mitral valve replacement, and has potentially fatal complications such as systemic emboli or total obstruction of the prosthetic valve. However, within the setting of a giant left atrium, the ball had sufficient free space to enlarge, without causing any obstructive complication. Although in this situation urgent cardiac surgery is mandatory, the patient refused surgery and died from cerebral emboli one week later while receiving effective anticoagulation.

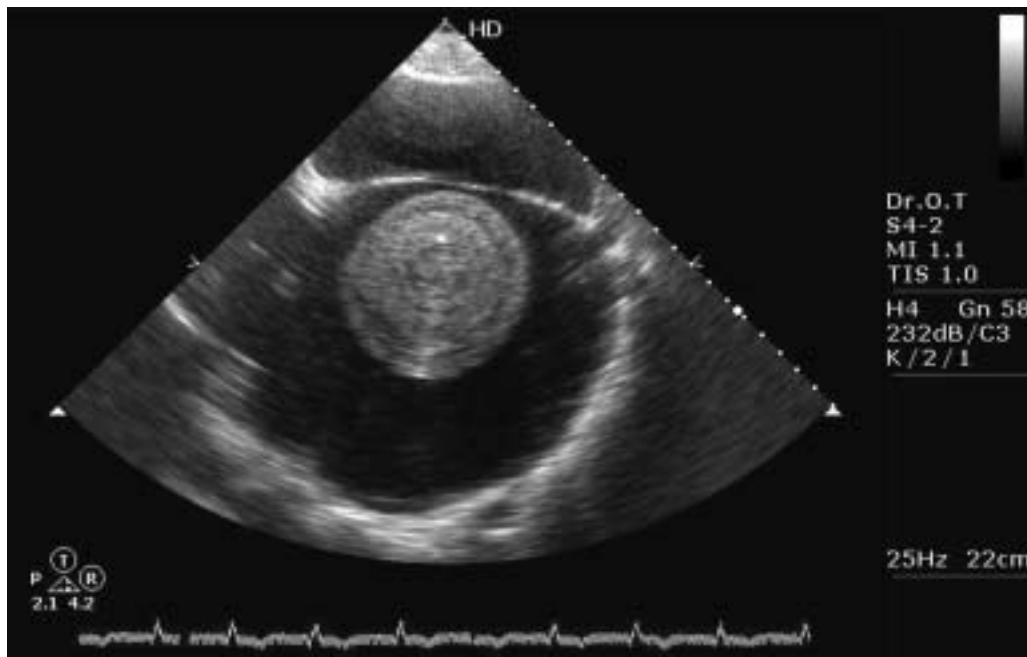


Figure 1: Transthoracic echocardiography showing the free-floating ball thrombus in the left atrium.

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