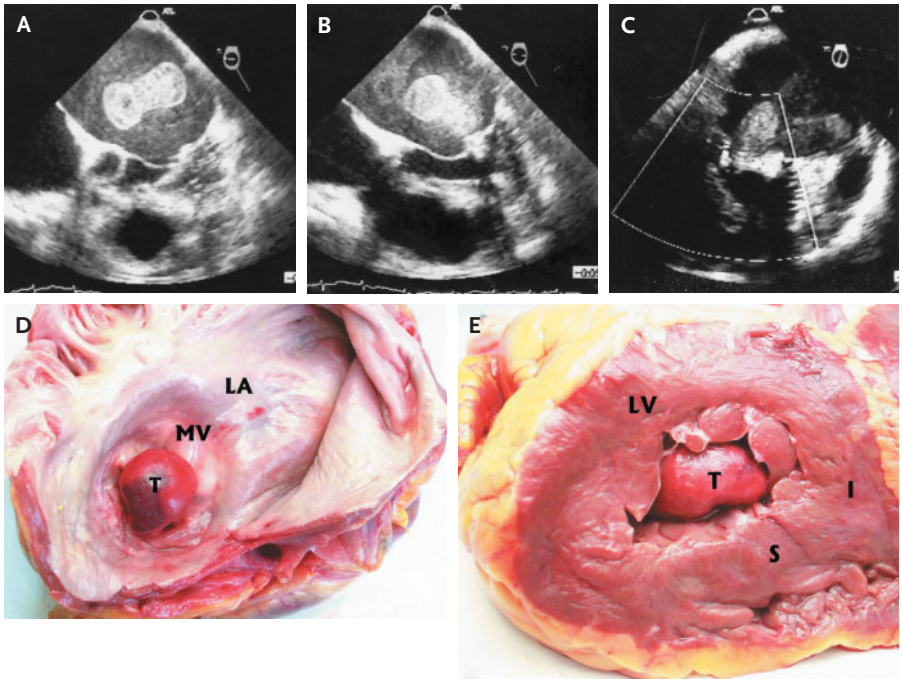
IMAGES IN CLINICAL MEDICINE

Fatal Free-Floating Left Atrial Thrombus



A 68-year-old woman who had been resuscitated after cardiac arrest was admitted because of chest pain. The electrocardiogram showed atrial fibrillation and ST-segment elevation in leads II, III, and aVF, findings that indicated a recent inferior myocardial infarct. Transthoracic echocardiography showed hypokinesis of the posterior wall and a free-floating left atrial thrombus. Transesophageal echocardiography showed a dilated left atrium (42 by 63 mm) and severe mitral-valve stenosis, with a mitral-valve area of 0.8 cm^2, and confirmed the presence of the free-floating thrombus (Panels A and B), which caused intermittent occlusion of the mitral valve (Panel C and video clip). The patient was immediately prepared for open-heart surgery but had fatal cardiorespiratory arrest. At autopsy, the heart weighed 485 g. Examination of the left atrium (LA, Panel D) showed mitral-valve stenosis (MV) and a large, 60-mm thrombus (T) that had lodged in the left atrioventricular orifice, causing sudden death. Examination of the left ventricle (LV, Panel E) showed a recent myocardial infarct (I) of the posteroinferior wall, measuring 50 by 20 mm and adjoining the ventricular septum (S).

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