A Man with Fever, Headache, and Confusion

(See pages 1856–7 for Answer to Photo Quiz)

In September 2003, a 61-year-old man was admitted to the hospital with a 5-day history of high fever, confusion, headache, and weakness. A transient rash that enveloped his chest, arms, and back was also reported by his family. The patient’s past medical history was notable for non–small-cell lung cancer, for which he had recently completed the final cycle of chemotherapy. He was not taking any medications. The patient was a pastor from a small town in rural Pennsylvania. One week prior to admission, he spent the entire day outdoors at his church’s picnic. Physical examination was notable for a body temperature of 39.7°C, confusion, and meningismus. The results of routine laboratory tests and MRI of the brain were negative.

By hospital day 3, the patient was noted to have tremor, myoclonus, rigidity, bradykinesia, postural instability, weakness, and hyporeflexia. A lumbar puncture was performed, and laboratory values for the CSF specimen were as follows: glucose, 72 mg/dL (normal range, 40–70 mg/dL); protein, 157 mg/dL (normal range, 15–40 mg/dL); WBC count, 130 cells/mm³ (normal range, 0–5 cells/mm³); and a predominance of the cell type visible in figure 1.

What is your diagnosis?

Figure 1. Micrograph of a CSF specimen from a lumbar puncture