Images in cardio-thoracic surgery

Impending paradoxical embolus early post-coronary surgery

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A 74-year-old male presented with dyspnea 2 weeks post-CABG. Echocardiography demonstrated an impending paradoxical embolus. A large mobile serpiginous thrombus traversed a PFO and prolapsed across the mitral valve into the left ventricle during diastole (Fig. 1). At the time of emergency surgery, a 12 cm friable organizing thrombus was removed (Fig. 2).

Fig. 1. Echocardiography demonstrating the mobile impending paradoxical embolus straddling the atrial septum (top) in the left atrium (middle). The thrombus prolapsed into the left ventricle during diastole (bottom) [LA = left atrium, LV = left ventricle, RA = right atrium, RV = right ventricle].

Fig. 2. Pathology specimen of elongated friable thrombus measuring 12.0 cm × 0.8 cm.