


CARDIOVASCULAR FLASHLIGHT

An indirect shot to the heart

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A 49-year-old man presented with breathlessness. Chest X-ray (Panels A–C) showed a foreign body in line with the thoracic vertebra. Further CT imaging confirmed a metallic object embedded in the right vertebral (Panels D–K). He had no history of cardiac or thoracic surgery and no history of penetrating trauma. On further questioning it was discovered that he was shot in the back of the right knee with an air-rifle pellet 27 years ago (Panel L). This had subsequently migrated into the venous system and embolized to the right heart.

Migration and venous or arterial embolization of penetrating foreign bodies are rare, but recognized. If they result in obstruction, then percutaneous or surgical retrieval is indicated. In this patient, this finding was considered to be incidental and unrelated to his symptoms. After joint cardiothoracic/interventional cardiology discussion, no further treatment was recommended. He is due to have CT monitoring in 2 years.

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