Fatal *Legionella maceachernii* Pneumonia

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Received 22 July 1985/Accepted 3 September 1985

*Legionella maceachernii*, previously isolated only from the environment, was shown to be a cause of fatal pneumonia in an immunocompromised patient.

*Legionella maceachernii* is a newly described species that was isolated initially from a potable water cistern (1). Antiserum to isolate PX-1-G2-E2 (ATCC 35300) was produced in rabbits, absorbed with *Legionella anisa* cells, and used with antisera to the 32 other serogroup strains of *Legionella* spp. (2) to test *Legionella*-like organisms received for identification at the Centers for Disease Control, Atlanta, Ga. As described below, *L. maceachernii* has now been isolated from a patient with fatal *Legionella* pneumonia.

The patient, a 54-year-old man with multiple myeloma, was admitted to the University Medical Center, Tucson, Ariz., with a 2-day history of fever, nausea, and diarrhea. His lungs were initially clear by physical examination and chest X ray, but during his first 3 days of hospitalization he developed respiratory difficulties that correlated radiologically with a progressive right lower lobe pneumonia and pleural effusion. Initial antibiotic therapy included cephalirin, tobramycin, and ticarcillin. On day 3, intravenous erythromycin, 4 g per day, was started to treat possible legionellosis. Initial cultures of blood, sputum, urine, cerebrospinal fluid, and stool failed to reveal an etiologic agent. A transtracheal aspirate was obtained with negative results, including culture for *Legionella* spp. on buffered charcoal-yeast extract agar. Direct immunofluorescence assays were not performed because of an insufficient quantity of specimen. By day 6, there was no resolution of the pneumonia, and spiking fevers continued. Amphotericin B and trimethoprim-sulfamethoxazole were added, and cephalirin, ticarcillin, and tobramycin were discontinued from the treatment regimen. On day 13, the respiratory difficulties of the patient suddenly increased, with frank bleeding from the upper respiratory tract, and he died.

At autopsy, the most prominent findings were bronchopneumonia with focal organization and hemorrhage in the right lung. Lung cultures yielded gram-negative bacilli which grew aerobically on buffered charcoal-yeast extract but not on blood or chocolate agar. The organisms resembled *Legionella* spp. but failed to stain with Centers for Disease Control direct immunofluorescence conjugates to *Legionella pneumophila* serogroups 1 to 6, *Legionella micdadei*, *Legionella longbeachae* serogroups 1 and 2, *Legionella gormanii*, *Legionella dumoffii*, or *Legionella bozemanii*. Viral cultures of the lung yielded cytomegalovirus. Short bacilli which were not shown to methenamine silver, acid-fast, or Gram-stain methods were observed with Dieterle silver stains of the lung tissue. The *Legionella*-like organism was sent to the Arizona Department of Health Services, Phoenix, which forwarded it to the Centers for Disease Control after verifying the above results.

At the Centers for Disease Control, a single-colony pick of the *Legionella*-like organism was grown on buffered charcoal-yeast extract agar and tested for typical *Legionella* spp. phenotypic and genotypic characteristics. Tests were positive for catalase, oxidase, gelatinase, flagella, and production of brown pigment on tyrosine-containing agar. Results were negative for autofluorescence, beta-lactamase, hippurate hydrolysis, carbohydrate fermentation, urease, and nitrate reduction. DNA hybridization reactions identified the *Legionella*-like organism as *L. maceachernii* (1), with 90% relatedness to the type strain of *L. maceachernii*, PX-1-G2-E2. Gas-liquid chromatographic profiles were consistent with those for PX-1-G2-E2 (William R. Mayberry, personal communication). The isolate agglutinated strongly with *L. maceachernii* antiserum but not with antisera to any other known *Legionella* species and serogroup (2).

These results show that *L. maceachernii* is another *Legionella* species isolated initially from environmental specimens and shown subsequently to be a human pathogen when tests were available to identify it.

We thank William R. Mayberry for gas-liquid chromatographic analyses, Arnold G. Steigerwalt for the DNA hybridization results, and Joan Nagel for secretarial assistance.

**LITERATURE CITED**


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