

IMAGES IN CLINICAL MEDICINE

## A Tickling in the Ear



**A** 63-YEAR-OLD MAN PRESENTED WITH ACUTE PRURITUS AND BUBBLING tinnitus in his right ear, without hearing loss. Otoscopy revealed a tick anchored to the anterosuperior portion of the right tympanic membrane. The tick was removed by suction after a topical anesthetic agent was applied to the patient's ear. The tinnitus resolved immediately. Aside from mild hyperemia, no visible damage to the tympanic membrane was observed. The tick was identified as the nymph form of *Ixodes ricinus*, a species frequently found on cats throughout Europe. This tick can serve as a vector for *Borrelia burgdorferi*. In addition to being able to transmit disease, ticks and other insects can be found as foreign bodies in the outer ear canal. The differential diagnosis for acute tinnitus and pruritus without hearing loss should prompt evaluation for a foreign body in the outer ear canal. Two weeks after presentation, this patient had a normal tympanic membrane. Serologic studies for *B. burgdorferi* remained negative. On review, the patient remembered having had close contact with his domestic cat the evening before the symptoms began.

DOI: 10.1056/NEJMicm1114612

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