BARTONELLA QUINTANA

(formerly called Trench fever)

BARTONELLA QUINTANA: HOW IT SPREADS, WHO IT AFFECTS, AND HOW TO PREVENT IT.

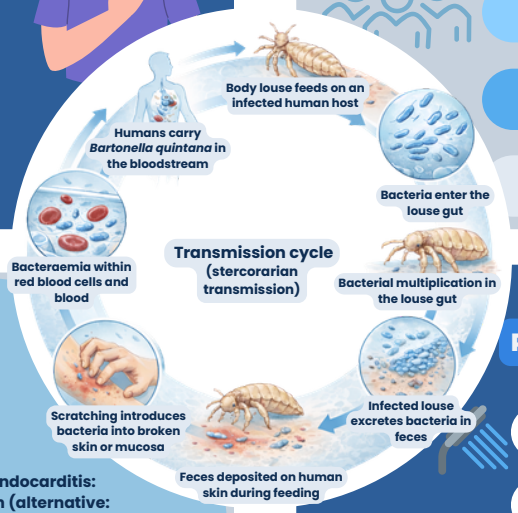
Bartonella Quintana is a socially driven, culture-negative infection transmitted by body lice. It is associated with inadequate housing, crowded conditions, and limited access to hygiene. In Canada, cases are increasing in settings where these conditions persist.

COMMON SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

1. Often asymptomatic except in severe cases
2. Severe cases often present with endocarditis and/or embolization
3. Historical symptoms of "trench fever" - fever, bone pain, fatigue - are no longer common

SOCIAL DETERMINANTS AND RISKS OF TRANSMISSION

- Prolonged houselessness
- Crowded living conditions
- Limited hygiene and sanitation increase the risk of body lice infestation.
- Drug/alcohol use disorder
- Weakened immune system



CLINICAL TREATMENT AND MANAGEMENT

Antibiotic Treatment

- Chronic bacteremia / endocarditis: Doxycycline-rifampicin (alternative: doxycycline-gentamicin)
- Bacillary angiomatosis: Erythromycin (first line), Doxycycline (second line)

Body Lice Control

- Oral ivermectin is effective for delousing in shelter settings
- Wash clothing at >50°C and dry thoroughly

PREVENTION AND CONTROL

- Regular access to showers
- Washing and drying clothes and bedding in hot water
- Quickly treating and covering skin wounds
- Avoiding sharing clothing or bedding
- Treating body lice early

Epidemiology of *Bartonella quintana* in Canada

- More than 25 cases were reported in 2024, with PCR-confirmed infections continuing to occur annually. Most diagnosed cases involved endocarditis, with a mortality rate of 19%.
- Four cases of B. Quintana endocarditis occurred in inner-city Winnipeg, two of which presented with ruptured cerebral mycotic aneurysms.
- The majority of cases were diagnosed in Alberta, Ontario, and Manitoba.
- Evidence suggests Bartonella Quintana is significantly under-diagnosed: cases are not reportable, and affected populations are less likely to have adequate medical care.

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