the use of single-titer spotted fever–group cross-reactive enzyme immunoassay serology. Few cases are specifically determined to be caused by *R. rickettsii*. Currently, many febrile persons who do not have RMSF present with cross-reactive antibodies, possibly because of previous exposure to the highly prevalent spotted fever–group rickettsia *R. amblyommii*.

TREATMENT ROCKY MOUNTAIN SPOTTED FEVER

The drug of choice for the treatment of both children and adults with RMSF is doxycycline, except when the patient is pregnant or allergic to this drug (see below). Because of the severity of RMSF, immediate empirical administration of doxycycline should be strongly considered for any patient with a consistent clinical presentation in the appropriate epidemiologic setting. Doxycycline is administered orally (or, in the presence of coma or vomiting, intravenously) at 200 mg/d in two divided doses. For children with suspected RMSF, up to five courses of doxycycline may be administered with minimal risk of dental staining. Other regimens include oral tetracycline (25–50 mg/kg per day) in four divided doses. Treatment with chloramphenicol, a less effective drug, is advised only for patients who are pregnant or allergic to doxycycline. The antirickettsial drug should be administered until the patient has been afebrile and improving clinically for 2–3 days. β-Lactam antibiotics, erythromycin, and aminoglycosides have no role in the treatment of RMSF, and sulfa-containing drugs are associated with more adverse outcomes than no treatment at all. There is little clinical experience with fluoroquinolones, clarithromycin, and azithromycin, which are not recommended. The most seriously ill patients are managed in intensive care units, with careful administration of fluids to achieve optimal tissue perfusion without precipitating noncardiogenic pulmonary edema. In some severely ill patients, hypoxemia requires intubation and mechanical ventilation; oliguric or anuric acute renal failure requires hemodialysis; seizures necessitate the use of antiseizure medication; anemia or severe hemorrhage necessitates transfusions of packed red blood cells; or bleeding with severe thrombocytopenia requires platelet transfusions. Heparin is not a useful component of treatment, and there is no evidence that glucocorticoids affect outcome.

Prevention Avoidance of tick bites is the only available preventive approach. Use of protective clothing and tick repellents, inspection of the body once or twice a day, and removal of ticks before they inoculate rickettsiae reduce the risk of infection. Prophylactic doxycycline treatment of tick bites has no proven role in preventing RMSF.

MEDITERRANEAN SPOTTED FEVER (BOUTONNEUSE FEVER), AFRICAN TICK-BITE FEVER, AND OTHER TICK-BORNE SPOTTED FEVERS

Epidemiology *R. conorii* is prevalent in southern Europe, Africa, and southwestern and south-central Asia. Regional names for the disease caused by this organism include Mediterranean spotted fever, Kenya tick typhus, Indian tick typhus, Israeli spotted fever, and Astrakhan spotted fever. The disease is characterized by high fever, rash, and—in most geographic locales—an inoculation eschar (*tâche noire*) at the site of the tick bite. A severe form of the disease (mortality rate, 50%) occurs in patients with diabetes, alcoholism, or heart failure.

African tick-bite fever, caused by *R. africae*, occurs in rural areas of sub-Saharan Africa and in the Caribbean islands and is transmitted by *Amblyomma hebraeum* and *A. variegatum* ticks. The average incubation period is 4–10 days. The mild illness consists of headache, fever, eschar, and regional lymphadenopathy. *Amblyomma* ticks often feed in groups, with the consequent development of multiple eschars. Rash may be vesicular, sparse, or absent altogether. Because of tourism in sub-Saharan Africa, African tick-bite fever is the rickettsiosis most frequently imported into Europe and North America. A similar disease caused by the closely related species *R. parkeri* is transmitted by *A. maculatum* in the United States and by *A. triste* in South America.

R. japonica causes Japanese spotted fever, which also occurs in Korea. Similar diseases in northern Asia are caused by *R. sibirica* and *R. heilongjiangensis*. Queensland tick typhus due to *R. australis* is transmitted by *Ixodes holocyclus* ticks. Flinders Island spotted fever, found on the island for which it is named as well as in Tasmania, mainland Australia, and Asia, is caused by *R. honei*. In Europe, patients infected with *R. slovaca* after a wintertime *Dermacentor* tick bite manifest an afebrile illness with an eschar (usually on the scalp) and painful regional lymphadenopathy.

Diagnosis Diagnosis of these tick-borne spotted fevers is based on clinical and epidemiologic findings and is confirmed by serology, immunohistochemical demonstration of rickettsiae in skin biopsy specimens, cell-culture isolation of rickettsiae, or PCR of skin biopsy, eschar, or blood samples. Serologic diagnosis detects antibodies to antigens shared among spotted fever–group rickettsiae, hindering identification of the etiologic species. In an endemic area, a possible diagnosis of rickettsial spotted fevers should be considered when patients present with fever, rash, and/or a skin lesion consisting of a black necrotic area or a crust surrounded by erythema.

TREATMENT TICK-BORNE SPOTTED FEVERS

Successful therapeutic agents include doxycycline (100 mg bid orally for 1–5 days) and chloramphenicol (500 mg qid orally for 7–10 days). Pregnant patients may be treated with josamycin (3 g/d orally for 5 days). Data on the efficacy of treatment of mildly ill children with clarithromycin or azithromycin should not be extrapolated to adults or to patients with moderate or severe illness.

RICKETTSIALPOX

R. akari infects mice and their mites (*Liponyssoides sanguineus*), which maintain the organisms by transovarial transmission.

Epidemiology Rickettsialpox is recognized principally in New York City, but cases have also been reported in other urban and rural locations in the United States and in Ukraine, Croatia, Mexico, and Turkey. Investigation of eschars suspected of representing bioterrorism-associated cutaneous anthrax revealed that rickettsialpox occurs more frequently than previously realized.

Clinical Manifestations A papule forms at the site of the mite's feeding, develops a central vesicle, and becomes a 1- to 2.5-cm painless black crusted eschar surrounded by an erythematous halo (Fig. 211-2). Enlargement of the regional lymph nodes draining the eschar suggests initial lymphogenous spread. After an incubation period of

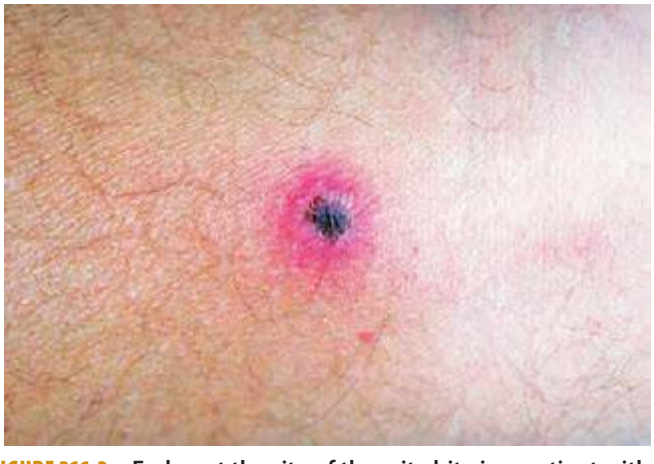

FIGURE 211-2 Eschar at the site of the mite bite in a patient with rickettsialpox. *(Reprinted from A Krusell et al: Emerg Infect Dis 8:727, 2002. Photo obtained by Dr. Kenneth Kaye.)*