DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

MLS Laboratory Update: Announcing Fungal Disease Awareness Week!

SEPTEMBER 14TH, 2023

Purpose of this Message:

To provide awareness to MLS laboratorians about fungal diseases and to provide resources to learn more.

Action Item:

Please review the following information regarding fungal diseases and forward to those in your organization responsible for reporting reportable disease laboratory results to MDH, and those who diagnose or are interested in fungal diseases.

Background:

Next Week is Fungal Disease Awareness Week! Join us in recognizing these rare diseases, such as blastomycosis, histoplasmosis, aspergillosis and *Candida auris* infections. Increased awareness of fungal diseases is one of the most important ways we can improve early recognition, reduce delays in diagnosis and provide life-saving treatment. Events include:

- **Algorithms for Diagnosing the Endemic Mycoses: Blastomycosis, Coccidioidomycosis, and Histoplasmosis**, a webinar from the Clinician Outreach and Communication Activity (COCA) Call **Thursday September 21** at 1pm CT, featuring new diagnostic algorithms for endemic fungal diseases, for more information and registration, see: Algorithms for Diagnosing the Endemic Mycoses Blastomycosis, Coccidioidomycosis, and Histoplasmosis (https://emergency.cdc.gov/coca/calls/2023/callinfo_092123.asp). Please spread the word about these new tools to reduce diagnostic delays that often occur with these infections!
- Join on **Tuesday, September 19**, at 11am CT for a Live Twitter chat and Spaces event discussing Healthcare-associated Infections such as mold outbreaks, *Candia auris*, and the recent fungal meningitis outbreak. Follow the conversation on @MSGERC and @CDC_NCEZID and use the hashtag: #FungalWeek23
- If your laboratory performs identification of fungal isolates, your staff can access free online training titled Mycology Laboratory Series (https://learn.aphl.org/learn/external-ecommerce;view=none;redirectURL=?ctldoc-catalog-0=se-%22Mycology%20Laboratory%20Series%22)
- Find more events on the CDC Fungal Disease Awareness Week website (https://www.cdc.gov/fungal/fungal-disease-awareness-week/)

Fungal Disease in Minnesota:
Endemic fungal diseases include histoplasmosis and blastomycosis, both found in our state, and coccidioidomycosis, which can affect our residents who travel to the southwest United States. While these diseases are rare, their incidence has been increasing in recent years. Since there are no preventive measures such as vaccines, awareness and early diagnosis are key to reducing morbidity and mortality from these infections.

In addition to the endemic fungal diseases, there have been ten cases of *Candida auris* in Minnesota since it was first was identified in the state in 2019. The first case with no recent travel outside of Minnesota was identified in 2023. *C. auris* is often multidrug resistant and can be associated with outbreaks in health care facilities, like hospitals and nursing homes. MDH encourages hospitals to screen patients for *C. auris* colonization on admission if they have had an overnight stay in a hospital located outside of the U.S. or in areas of the U.S. with *C. auris* transmission. See CDC website Tracking Candida auris (https://www.cdc.gov/candida-auris/tracking-c-auris/)

Key Reminders Regarding Fungal Diseases

- Infections with the endemic mycoses often present with signs and symptoms similar to community-acquired pneumonia and are not recognized until numerous courses of antibiotics have been prescribed. New diagnostic algorithms on the CDC webpage: Clinical Testing Guidance for Coccidioidomycosis, Histoplasmosis, and Blastomycosis in Patients with Community-Acquired Pneumonia (https://www.cdc.gov/fungal/hcp/diagnosis-testing/) can help reduce this diagnostic delay for patients who live in or travel to areas with endemic fungal pathogens. Please share these widely with primary care clinicians.
- Submit yeast isolates that identify as *C. auris*, or one of the commonly misidentified organisms such as *Candida haemulonii,* to MDH-PHL for confirmation. See CDC website Identification of *Candida auris* (https://www.cdc.gov/candida-auris/hcp/laboratories/identification-of-c-auris.html) for more information about identification of *C. auris*.
- If your laboratory does not perform fungal identification or needs assistance, isolates can be sent to MDH-PHL for identification. Isolates should be sent at room temperature.
- To Submit Isolates to MDH-PHL:
    - Mold isolates use the MDH General Infectious Disease Laboratory Submission Form (https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/idlab/forms.html)
        - Fill in the Mycology section
    - Yeast isolates use the ARLAB Central Region Clinical Testing and Submission Form (https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/idlab/arln.html)
        - Check the "Yeast identification/AFST Project 2180 (YEASTID) box

Additional Information:

Please see MDH's Website pages for more information:

Blastomycosis (https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/blastomycosis/basics.html)
Histoplasmosis (https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/histoplasmosis/index.html)
Candida auris (https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/candidiasis/auris/index.html)

#ThinkFungus

Questions:
For laboratory related questions, please call the MDH Microbiology Lab at 651-201-5073 or Mycology Lab at 651-201-5052.
For reporting questions please call MDH Infectious Disease at 651-201-5414.

Thank you,

Paula M. (Snippes) Vagnone, MT (ASCP)
Microbiology Supervisor
AR Lab Network Central Region Coordinator
Public Health Laboratory, Minnesota Department of Health
Phone : 651-201-5581
Paula.snippes@state.mn.us
arlnmn@state.mn.us

Minnesota Laboratory System
Minnesota Department of Health, Public Health Laboratory
601 Robert St. N, St. Paul, MN 55164-0899
651-201-5200
health.mnlabsystem@state.mn.us
www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/idlab/mls/index.html

To obtain this information in a different format, call: 651-201-5200.