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Fungal brain abscess in the era of COVID-19: an experience from a tertiary care Neurosciences Institute in South India
Nagarathna S, Arghade Samaddar, Veena Kumar H B, Priya Krishnan, Kayavy M, Dwarkanath Sinivas National Institute Of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences, Bengaluru, India
Poster session 2, September 22, 2022, 12:30 PM - 1:30 PM

Introduction: Severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) is ruling the world for more than 2 years since 2020. In 2021, the second wave of COVID-19 arrived in the “delta variant” across Europe, causing significant morbidity and mortality. In addition, the epidemic of COVID-19-associated meningitis affected the Indian subcontinent specifically, with a whopping 41,512 cases and 3516 deaths attributed to this dreadful disease.

Methods: The single-center retrospective cross-sectional study was aimed to determine the impact of COVID-19 on fungal brain abscesses at a non-COVID tertiary care Neurosciences Institute in South India. The study included all cases diagnosed with fungal brain abscess microscopically (microscopy and/or fungal culture), supported by radiological findings or by histopathological examination.

Results: Out of 26 patients, 24 (92%) were cases of fungal brain abscess. In 2021, out of 10503 (2% cases) had a fungal pathology, while it was 10.4% (2213) in 2022, a 2.04% (142) till April 2022. Overall, a male predominance was observed (2026, 77%) were males). The cases had an even distribution from 6 to 62 years, with no predilection in any particular age group. The most common underlying comorbidity was type 2 diabetes mellitus (13/26, 50%). Four cases had a past history of COVID-19.

Conclusion: A significant increase in the incidence of fungal brain abscess has been observed in the COVID-19 era, particularly with each new wave of infection. Clinical features along with imaging and mycological findings are crucial in making an early diagnosis and decision regarding antifungal therapy. Accurate identification to the species level is necessary to guide optimal antifungal therapy as several species exhibit resistance to antifungal drugs.

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Diagnostic dilemmas in Pneumocystis pneumonia in case of long COVID-19
Arpit Singh1
Amrit Hospital Mulundapur, Kolkata, India
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Background: To diagnose Pneumocystis pneumonia in an underlying COVID-19 infection is difficult because of the clinical and radiological indistinguishability of the presentation.

Case Presentation: We report the case of a 67-year-old male background of type 2 diabetes mellitus (DM) and hypertension (HTN), who presented to the emergency department for severe dyspnea for 6 days. He is treated with corticosteroids and other supportive therapy. Initially, the patient responded well to treatment but suddenly his hypoxia is increasing and getting uncontrolled. All possible causes of deterioration hypoxia were evaluated and cause negated. Later stage, BAL was done and immunofluorescent test for PCP came positive. Systemic, continuous a and gradually hypoxia improved and extramedullary.

Conclusion: Pneumocystis and COVID-19 co-infection needs serious consideration, particularly for patients with long-term COVID-19, even if patients do not have conventional risk factors for Pneumocystis pneumonia.

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COVID-associated invasive pulmonary aspergillosis (CAPA) — a case report
Aash Shabir1, Prakash Shant1
Sir Ganga Ram Hospital, Delhi, India
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COVID-associated pulmonary aspergillosis (CAPA) is a severe fungal infection with a high mortality rate. The incidence of CAPA is on the rise possibly due to the prescription of corticosteroids and tocilizumab two repurposed drugs used for treating SARS-CoV-2. Diagnosis is challenging due to the non-specific nature of symptoms. Voriconazole is the mainstay of therapy. We present a case of a 42-year-old male presenting with left hydro pneumothorax post recovery from COVID infection, and later succumbed to this complication. Patients developing pulmonary aspergillosis after short-term steroid therapy are uncommon. The possibility of aspergillosis in immunocompromised patients should be considered in those on systemic steroids and demonstrating pulmonary function.

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Dematiaceous fungi as a rare cause of fungal sinuitis in a tertiary care center
K.V.P Sai Kiran Kumar1, Immuculata Xee2, Gagadeep Singh2, Janyia Sachdev2, Aksh Thakar2
1All India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi, India
2All India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi, India
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Objectives: To discuss the occurrence and diagnosis of dematiaceous fungi as a causative organism of fungal sinusitis in patients at a tertiary care center in North India. Since there is limited data on its prevalence, this study was aimed to know the non-Aspergillus causes of fungal sinusitis focusing on the dematiaceous fungi.

Methods: A total of 458 nasal biopsy samples, from the department of pulmonary medicine ward and IRU were received over a period of 3 years, from January 2019 to December 2021. The samples were subjected to conventional mycological diagnostic techniques including direct-epifluorescence and light microscopy, culture on solid media and visual identification of growth in cultures using buffered charcoal creme agar.

Results: Out of 458 samples, no fungi were isolated from 299 samples (64.29%). Aspergillus spp from 63 samples (13.76%), dematiaceous fungi from 10 samples (2.12%), and other fungi from 79 samples (17.5%) Among the dematiaceous fungi isolated, 7 isolates were identified as Alternaria spp. (7%) and 1 isolates were identified as Curvularia species (3%) and described.

Conclusion: Most reported cases of allergy and invasive sinutis were attributed to Aspergillus spp. However, in this study, dematiaceous ‘Black’ fungi like Alternaria and Curvularia, were also identified as causes of fungal sinusitis in both immunocompromised and immunocompetent individuals, showing an increasing epidemiographic pattern. Hence a high index of clinical suspicion and appropriate laboratory diagnostic assays in instituting appropriate treatment such as surgical debulking, reducing immunosuppression, and antifungal treatment with newer azoles.

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Molecular epidemiology of clinical filamentous fungi in Qatar beyond Aspergillus and Fusarium
Husam Eddin Mohamed1,2, Jose Houben3,4, Teun Bruwkoudj5,6, Mona Almakali4, Saad Taj-Abdeen7,8
1Division of Microbiology, Department of Laboratory Medicine and Pathology, Hamad Medical Corporation, Doha, Qatar
2Waterloo Fungal Biodiversity Institute, Utrecht, The Netherlands
3Institute of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Dynamics (IBED), University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam, The Netherlands
4Department of Medicine, Hamad Medical Corporation, Qatar
5University of Babylon, Hilla, Iraq
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Objectives: Due to an increasing number of patients at risk, i.e., those with compromised immune system and/or receiving aggressive chemotherapy treatment, invasive fungal infections (IFIs) are increasingly being reported. They are associated with significantly high mortality rates. Aspergillus spp., particularly A. fumigatus, is the most frequent of modality-related IFI around the world followed by Fusarium spp., however, other molds are emerging as human pathogens. The aim of this study was to explore the epidemiology and prevalence of the non-Aspergillus and non-Fusarium molds in human clinical samples over 11 years period in Qatar based tertiary hospital using molecular techniques.

Methods: A total of 91 clinical specimens positive for molds belonging to 90 patients were recorded in about 11 years (September 2011 to November 2024). The isolates were identified based on morphological characteristics and by sequencing the internal transcribed spacer (ITS) gene. To confirm the identification, a phylogenetic tree based on ITS sequences was constructed.

Results: Most patients were males (72%), 6% were immunocompromised, 12% had IBD, and 7% died within 30 days of diagnosis. The fungal isolates were recovered from a variety of clinical samples, including sputa, dust, bone, scalp, nasal cavity, wounds, respiratory samples, body fluids, ear, cutis, tissues, abscess, and blood specimens. Dematiaceous fungi were most prevalent (the mold isolates, 39%), followed by dermatophytes (29/28, 27%), Mucorales (16/99, 18%), and other hyaline molds (17/9, 18%). Among the mold isolates were the major cause of IF (51, 45.4%). (Table 1). Superficial mycoses were caused by dermatophytes (64%) and non-dermatophytes (34%). Furthermore, rare fungi that are not commonly known to cause human diseases were recovered such as Rhizoctonia postreplexis and Sordariomycetes.

Conclusion: The current study highlights the epidemiology and spectrum of mold genera, other than Aspergillus and Fusarium, recovered from human clinical samples in Qatar, which can aid in surveillance of uncommon and emerging mycoses other than aspergillosis and fusariosis.