

Histoplasmosis John Derendorf*

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Commentary

Histoplasmosis is caused by the fungus *Histoplasma capsulatum*, which mainly infects people through the respiratory tract. Samuel Taylor Darling, a pathologist at Ancon Hospital in the Panama Canal Zone, originally described *H. capsulatum* in 1906 during the autopsy of a patient from Martinique with a disseminating disease classified as a general protozoan infection [1]. Rocha-Lima, a Brazilian studying in Hamburg in 1912, was the first to indicate that Darling's microbe was a yeast rather than a protozoa. Since then, it has been increasingly common to be diagnosed with the condition. Until 1934, when Dodd and Tompkins detected histoplasmosis in a living infant [2], the diagnosis had always been done post mortem. De Monbreun of Vanderbilt University isolated and analysed the fungal culture from this case. De Monbreun found the dimorphism of *H. capsulatum* and detailed the fungal aetiology [3]. *H. capsulatum* has lately emerged as a significant opportunistic infection in people with immunodeficiency, mostly HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) who live in *H. capsulatum*-endemic areas [4]. This disorder is frequently self-limiting in normal children and does not necessitate therapy. Immunocompromised children are more likely to acquire a serious illness.

H. capsulatum is a dimorphic fungus found in parts of North, Central, and South America, as well as Africa and Asia. However, there have been reports of incidents throughout Europe. Outbreaks have been discovered in pigeon and poultry breeders, caverns where bats are frequent, and abandoned construction sites. The true incidence of histoplasmosis is unknown because most studies on the subject have been limited to areas where outbreaks of histoplasmosis have occurred and are based on skin testing. In addition, some research were conducted on specific populations, such as hospitalised patients or recruits [4,5,6]. The first environmental isolation occurred in 1948, when soil was contaminated with chicken excreta [6]. *H. capsulatum*'s natural habitat is soil, particularly those tainted by bat or bird droppings, which generates a nitrogen-rich environment. Other environmental needs include high carbohydrate concentrations, cationic salts, acidic pH, soil temperatures ranging from -18 8°C to 37 8°C, and a moisture content of 12% [6].

When it comes to age groups, histoplasmosis primarily affects young adults who become sick during epidemics. Even when exposed to epidemics, children have a high probability of asymptomatic or mild illnesses. Infants, on the other hand, are at risk of acquiring more serious sickness or infections that spread widely [6]. Large inoculum exposure and acquired

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immunodeficiency resulting from the use of immunosuppressive drugs, malnutrition, or HIV infection are additional risk factors for disseminated histoplasmosis at any age. Disseminated histoplasmosis is also predisposed by primary immunodeficiency disorders that affect the function of T lymphocytes, monocytes, and macrophages.

Despite the notion that immunocompromised hosts are more susceptible to histoplasmosis, there have been cases of lung and central nervous system symptoms in immunocompetent patients. There is no person-to-person or animal-to-person transmission, and no isolation procedures are required.

Reinfection can occur in an immunocompromised host with declining cell-mediated immunity when they are exposed to even a modest inoculum from the environment. Histoplasmosis is usually asymptomatic and self-limiting in most cases. Fever, cough, and malaise are common symptoms that appear when symptoms do arise.

References

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