Cryptococcus Gattii Yeast or Fungus – Stats & Facts



FACTS

1. C gattii infection can occur in not only tropical and subtropical regions, but also other geographical settings.
2. C. gattii can affect both immunocompetent as well as immunocompromised individuals and result in a substantial systemic fungal infection, mainly in the lungs and the CNS.
3. C. gattii infections are rare. Worldwide, many of the reported cases of C. gattii infections have occurred in North America, Australia, and South America.
4. The infection is caused by breathing in Cryptococcus fungus. It is not transmitted from person to person or from animal to person. A person with cryptococcosis is not contagious.
5. If symptoms occur, the disease can cause pneumonia, meningitis, nodules in the lungs or brain, or skin infection.
6. The infection, cryptococcosis, affects the lungs first, because it is acquired by inhaling fungal spores. In the absence of therapy and sometimes despite it, the infection quickly spreads to the brain and other organs, with often fatal consequences. During this outbreak in the US, about a third of those who catch the disease succumb to it. Those infected with the disease have to undergo antifungal drug therapy that can last months. But those drugs often fail to curtail the disease, forcing many to opt for surgery.

STATS

- In published studies from Australia; Papua New Guinea; British Columbia, Canada; and the U.S. Pacific Northwest, the mortality rate among patients who have C. gattii infections ranges from 13% to 33%. The difference in the percent of people who die in different geographic areas is likely because of differences in patient characteristics, differences in the way patients are treated, and length of patient follow-up time.
- People become sick from cryptococcosis and about 16% die from the disease. People over 50 years of age, those who take oral steroids, smokers, those with chronic lung disease and those with immunocompromising conditions (e.g., HIV infection, cancer, organ transplant) are at a higher risk of

disease.

- In some cases, dissemination via the bloodstream may occur, most commonly to the central nervous system (CNS) with occasional spread to other organs such as skin, eye, and prostate. The predominant manifestations of C. gattii infection involve the lungs in the tropical climate of Australia (66% pulmonary) as well as the temperate climate of Vancouver Island and its surroundings (75% pulmonary).