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## Editorial

# Fungal infections: A growing concern in healthcare

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As the world deals with the escalating threat of antimicrobial resistance, another hidden danger quietly looms in the background: fungal infections.<sup>1</sup> Once considered a rare and relatively harmless, fungal infections have emerged as a significant and growing concern in hospital settings. Fungal infections, such as candidemia, aspergillosis, and cryptococcosis, have increased dramatically over the past few decades. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the incidence of invasive fungal infections has risen by 200% since 2000.<sup>2</sup> This surge is particularly pronounced among vulnerable populations, including immunocompromised patients, cancer patients, and those undergoing organ transplants.

Several factors such as overuse and misuse of antibiotics, increased immunocompromisation, warmer temperatures and altered ecosystems, weakened immunity, etc might have contributed to the growing threat of fungal infections. High mortality rates, prolonged hospital stays, limited treatment options and diagnostic limitations are significant consequences and challenges of fungal infections in healthcare centres.

Fungal spores are ubiquitous in the environment. In hospitals, inadequate cleaning, poor ventilation, or construction activities can increase the risk of fungal contamination in the environment.<sup>3</sup> In India, maintenance of central ventilation system in hospital is also one of

the major challenges due to administrative and financial concerns. Many times, fungal vegetations are formed within ventilation shafts due to lack of maintenance and such poor air filtration and ventilation systems in hospitals can contribute to increased fungal spore counts in the air and may rise of hospital acquired infections within premises. The design and maintenance of patient rooms, including the presence of mold or moisture, can influence fungal growth. Rooms that are not well-maintained can harbor fungal colonies.

As of now we do have limited treatment options for fungal isolates and rising incidents of fungal infections among patients might require need of new and economic methods for fungal identifications and susceptibility in nearby future. Preventing and controlling fungal infections in healthcare settings requires stringent infection control measures, including environmental cleaning, proper use of personal protective equipment, and careful management of invasive devices. However, maintaining these practices can be resource-intensive.

So in conclusion, Fungal infections have become a pressing concern in healthcare, threatening vulnerable populations in healthcare systems. It is imperative that we acknowledge this growing threat and take collective action to prevent, diagnose, and treat fungal infections effectively. By doing so, we can mitigate the impact of these insidious infections and ensure better patient outcomes.

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