News Alert! 17.04.2023

Fungal outbreak at Michigan paper mill :01 dead, 21

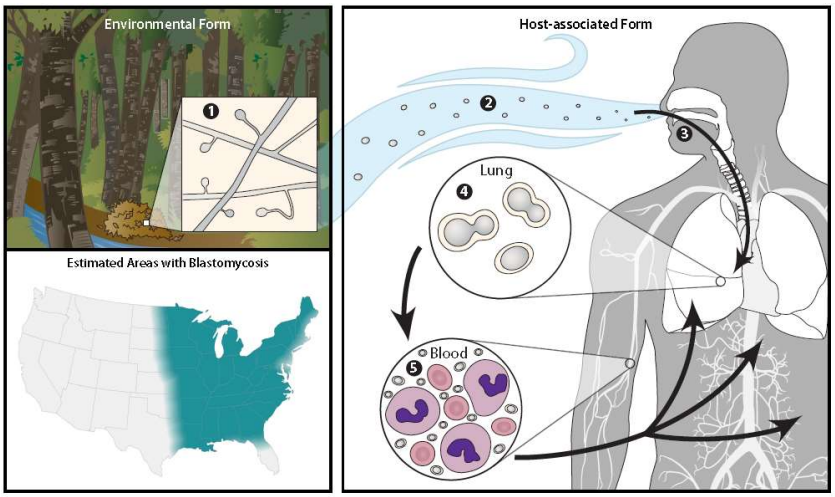

Fig 1: Biology of Blastomycosis

Confirmed and 96 sickened

A rare outbreak of blastomycosis has been reportedaffecting nearly 100 employees and one death, at a paper mill in Escanaba, Michigan, USA.Twenty-one of the cases have been confirmed by culture or microscopy, and the other 76 are probable, with symptoms of blastomycosis and a positive antigen or antibody test (CNN, April 16, 2023).

Blastomycosis is an uncommon, geographically restricted, pulmonary, and systemic mycosis, caused by fungus*Blastomyces.* The fungus lives in the environment as mold that produces fungal spores. After the spores enter the lungs, the body temperature allows the spores to transform into yeast, which may colonize the lungs or disseminate in the bloodstream to other parts of the body.Blastomycosis can be treated with antifungal medications.

In the United States, *Blastomyces* mainly lives particularly in areas surrounding the Ohio and Mississippi River valleys, the Great Lakes, and the Saint Lawrence River and is infrequently reported from countries outside the known endemic regions. In India, the fungus was isolated from pulmonary, cutaneous, and cerebral lesions in a few cases. The cases may be masquerading as tuberculosis, sarcoidosis in India. A high index of clinical suspicion, coupled with pro-active mycological and other laboratory diagnostic investigations, is likely to reveal the occurrence of many more imported and autochthonous cases of Blastomycosis in India.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Emerging and Zoonotic Infectious Diseases (NCEZID), Division of Foodborne, Waterborne, and Environmental Diseases (DFWED)

Chakrabarti A, Slavin MA. Endemic fungal infections in the Asia-Pacific region. Med Mycol. 2011 May;49(4):337-44