

CDC IDs New Mystery Disease as 'Urgent Threat'

A mystery disease that's often hard to detect is now being labeled an "urgent threat" by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The fungus *candida auris* hit several countries around the world over the last five years and was recently found in New York, New Jersey and Illinois.

According to the CDC, it is "multidrug-resistant" and called a "mystery" because it is difficult to identify with standard lab tests. The results have been damaging as it has spread throughout several health care facilities without medical officials being aware.

The New York Times reports an elderly man admitted into a Brooklyn hospital last year for an abdominal surgery was found to have the new deadly germ after a blood test was taken. Doctors immediately isolated him in the intensive care unit, but the germ had already spread across the room. The hospital required special cleaning equipment and had to remove some of the ceiling and floor tiles.

"Everything was positive—the walls, the bed, the doors, the curtains, the phones, the sink, the whiteboard, the poles, the pump," said Dr. Scott Lorin, president of the Brooklyn branch of Mount Sinai Hospital. "The mattress, the bed rails, the canister holes, the window shades, the ceiling—everything in the room was positive."

There weren't any antifungal medicines able to stop it. As a result, just like many others who contract the illness it causes, the man died within 90 days.

The CDC reports 587 cases of people having *C. auris*, with 309

in New York, 104 in New Jersey and 144 in Illinois. In Chicago, some nursing homes have indicated at least 50 percent of their residents have tested positive for the virus.

Researchers have identified certain fungi and bacteria that are morphing to defend themselves against modern medicines.

“It’s an enormous problem,” said Matthew Fisher, a professor of fungal epidemiology at Imperial College London. “We depend on being able to treat those patients with antifungals.” {eo}

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