

HISTOPLASMOSIS

A Review of Three Cases Studied in San Diego County

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■ *Three cases of histoplasmosis, a disease seldom reported in California, were diagnosed clinically by the authors in San Diego County. It is probable that there is a higher incidence of this disease in California than is at present recognized.*

Travel history, histoplasmin skin testing and serologic studies for mycotic infection are important in the diagnosis. Cultures of secretions and biopsy material are of great value if positive; but negative cultures (at least in non-endemic areas) do not rule out the disease. Travel and migration to and from endemic areas present opportunities for this disease to constitute a diagnostic problem far from the geographic area in which the disease was acquired.

Although usually benign, histoplasmosis may be severe in the acute state, may disseminate or may be chronically active and progressive. Amphotericin B is the only effective chemotherapeutic agent and it is usually reserved for these forms of the disease.

MANY EXCELLENT PAPERS thoroughly cover histoplasmosis in endemic areas.* Loosli,²⁰ estimated that 30 million people in the United States are infected with histoplasmosis capsulatum. Fungal infections now rank fourth in the United States as cause of death from infectious diseases.¹⁹ Histoplasmosis is known to occur in California and it is possible the incidence is much higher than is recognized. A high index of suspicion is important in atypical cases since histoplasmosis may simulate more common diseases. In the present age of swift travel and constant migration, histoplasmosis must always be considered by physicians anywhere in the United States and particularly in

California in light of the great influx of new people. We can no longer consider the Mississippi River Basin as "the endemic area." Surveys in "non-endemic areas" show positive skin reactions in as many as 70 per cent of persons tested.⁸ Yet, review of CALIFORNIA MEDICINE and of *California and Western Medicine* for the period 1936-1965 revealed only two reports dealing with three cases of active histoplasmosis. Diagnosis was by lung biopsy in one case, one by x-ray films of the chest, skin tests, serologic studies and residence history, and one by autopsy.

Reports of Cases

Following are reports of three additional cases discovered in San Diego County. Each is different from the others roentgenologically and clinically.

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*Reference Nos. 1, 2, 14, 31, 33, 36.