



Friday, January 04, 2013

Update: Possible Coccidioides Exposure to Lab Workers Due to Contamination of Commercial Cell Culture Tubes

Target audience: Clinical laboratories

Purpose of this Communication:

- This report updates information on the recent contamination of commercial cell cultures with fungus (*Coccidioides*) which could pose a risk to laboratory workers.

Background:

- Several clinical virology laboratories in New York State have recently reported receiving tubes of Primary Rhesus Monkey Kidney Cells (RhMK) from a commercial cell supplier, Diagnostic Hybrids of Athens, Ohio, that were contaminated with fungus. The tubes were distributed nationally.
- Tubes appeared normal on the day of arrival with no color change in the media. However, fungal growth was observed within 24 hours to a few days, in variable numbers of tubes, including those that had never been opened.

Update:

- Lot numbers of the affected RhMK cells are:
 - A491206T, 491206T, 491216, A491216, A491216B
- Molecular testing on these lots has identified *Coccidioides posadasii*, a human pathogen.
- All laboratories that have received shipments of the affected lot numbers have already been contacted directly by Diagnostic Hybrids.
- Laboratories should immediately stop using RhMK tubes from these lots and investigate whether there have been any potential personnel exposures at their facility.
- **Laboratories should destroy all tubes from these lots according to their institution's procedures for the destruction of potentially infectious waste.**
- Currently, available information does not suggest that other lots of RhMK cells are contaminated.

Steps for Laboratories to Take Now:

- **Laboratories should immediately stop using and destroy RhMK tubes from these implicated lots** and investigate whether there have been any potential exposures at their facility. If tubes were handled in a manner in accordance with recognized biosafety procedures, the risk of exposure to workers is currently expected to be low. A potential

exposure is one where inhalation of arthroconidia may have occurred, particularly if tubes were opened or manipulated outside of a biological safety cabinet.

- Laboratories that identify fungal contamination in any of the tubes are instructed to contact the Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH) using the information below.
- To date, there have been no reports of adverse health events due to exposure. However, laboratories are urged to ensure strict adherence to biosafety protocols.
- Potential *Coccidioides* exposures should be reported to MDCH using the information below.

Questions and Additional Information:

For laboratory related questions, please contact:

Dr. Jim Rudrik, Microbiology Section Manager
RudrikJ@michigan.gov
(517) 335-9641

At present, CDC does not have guidelines for responding to *Coccidioides* exposure in a laboratory as each exposure should be considered individually. If you have questions regarding possible exposures or need to report potential exposures, please contact:

Dr. Mary Grace Stobierski
Bureau of Disease Control, Prevention and Epidemiology
stobierskim@michigan.gov
(517) 335-8165

After-hours emergency contact number: (517) 335-9030

Thank you for your assistance in this investigation.