

Core brief

Monday 21 January 2019

Introduction

This issue of Core Brief updates on the cases of Cryptococcus at the Queen Elizabeth University Hospital.

Update on Cryptococcus cases

In light of the continuing public interest in the cases of Cryptococcus at the Queen Elizabeth University Hospital, we wanted to share the latest update with all staff.

Copy of media statement issued today

The investigation remains ongoing into the cause of two isolated cases of Cryptococcus at the Queen Elizabeth University Hospital.

At present, the clinical, management and infection control teams are focussed on ensuring a safe clinical environment for our patients and are actively managing this incident.

These two cases of infection were identified in December and an Incident Management Team was formed.

A likely source was identified and dealt with immediately.

The small number of paediatric and adult patients who are vulnerable to this infection have been receiving medication to prevent potential infection and this has proved effective.

Air sampling was carried out and HEPA filters were brought in on 10 January to specific areas before conclusive results were available. Early indications suggest the filters are having a positive effect.

Results identifying the organism were obtained on 16 January.

These control measures have been effective as there have been no further cases.

The organism is harmless to the vast majority of people and rarely causes disease in humans.

Dr Jennifer Armstrong, Medical Director, said: "Our thoughts are with the families of the two patients who have sadly died. An elderly patient has died of an unrelated cause while the factors contributing to the death of the second patient are being reviewed.

"We are pursuing rigorously the root causes of this incident to ensure all measures are taken to prevent it happening again.

"Health Protection Scotland are working closely with us in the investigations.

“I must stress again that this organism is harmless for the vast majority of humans and most people who are exposed to the fungus never get sick from it.

“The control measures that we have put in to place for the small number of patients who are vulnerable to the infection have been effective and there have been no further cases since December.”

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