Cryptococcal meningitis in human immunodeficiency virus (HIV)-negative patients in Alagoas (Brazil)

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Cryptococcosis is an important mycosis caused by the complex *Cryptococcus neoformans*/*C. gattii*, and can be asymptomatic, cutaneous and systemic, leading to cryptococcal meningitis (CM). Then, we aimed to evaluate cerebrospinal fluid from patients admitted to the Hospital Escola Dr. Hélvio Auto (HEHA)/ Maceió-AL with suspected meningitis from 2014 to 2015, searching for cryptococcosis cases among HIV-negative patients. The presence of *Cryptococcus* sp. was assessed by India ink staining, urease proof, Sabouraud dextrose agar, niger seed agar, CGB growth and CrAg® LFA reactivity. Among 11 cases confirmed, 3 patients with CM were negative for HIV antibodies, with no previous infections, autoimmune diseases or use of immunosuppressants. Patients came from São José da Tapera, São Miguel dos Campos and Maceió, and previously sought symptomatic treatment and antibacterials. They were hospitalized in HEHA with headache, fever, cough, stiff neck and persistent vomiting (15-60 days). All were men (age range: 15-44) who underwent chest X-ray and cranial tomography, with one showing cutaneous cryptococcosis after biopsy of erythema-papular lesions in the face. Amphotericin B (50 mg) was required in all cases with dexamethasone, as well ketoconozole and fluconazole for cutaneous lesions. The minor patient was admitted in ICU after 1 month of symptom onset with visual impairment, dyslalia, active addiction, positive bilateral Lasègue test and mental confusion, and died on the eleventh day. Prognosis in HIV-negative individuals is generally good and remaining patients are at the moment with controlled cryptococcosis, calling attention that both worked with pigeons and chickens. The cases presented here are unusual, therefore, rapid tests (dye and serologic) to identify *Cryptococcus* can contribute to the distinction from other similar conditions, improving therapeutic scheme for rapid recovery.

Key-words: *Cryptococcus,* cryptococcosis, meningitis.

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