

Species of Yeasts Identified from Different Clinical Samples Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Elias Seyoum^{1*}¹Ethiopian Public Health Institute, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia***Corresponding Author**

Elias Seyoum, Ethiopian Public Health Institute, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, eliasseyoum2@gmail.com

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Abstract**Background**

Currently, fungal diseases in humans are among the most problematic illnesses. This is the result of an increase in opportunistic fungal infections caused by a rise in the number of immune-compromised patients. Particularly, yeasts are the most common cause of fungal infections leading to a range of superficial types to life-threatening invasive infections. The aim of this study is to determine the species distribution of yeasts particularly of *Candida* species recovered from different clinical samples.

Method

A cross sectional study was conducted from January 2018 to September 2018 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Specimen from Oropharyngeal, nail, eye's cornea, and vaginal were collected from patients with signs and symptoms of infections. Identification was performed by using a YST card through VITEK 2 compact system. All data were coded, double-entered and analyzed using SPSS version 20.

Result

174 yeasts were recovered of which 51.1% were *Candida albicans*, 43.1% were nonalbicans *Candida* species and 5.7% were yeasts other than *Candida* species. Eighteen (18) different types of yeast species were identified from different clinical samples. All recognized yeast is considered as a causative agent of fungal infection in previously reported data worldwide.

Conclusion

C. albicans remaining the predominant species, but the emergence of non-albicans *Candida* and other than *Candida* species have increased. Thus, more studies on *Candida* prevalence are needed throughout country.

Keywords: *Candida Albicans*, Non- Albican *Candida* Species, Candidiasis.

Abbreviation:

SPP: Species

C: *Candida*

DRERC: Department of research and ethical review committee;

TSY: Trypticase soya broth;

ATCC: American Type Culture Collection;

ISO: International Organization for Standardization.

Background

Currently, fungal diseases in humans are among the most problematic illnesses to manage. Some fungi cause disease in immune-competent persons (fungal true pathogens), but most fungal infections occur in immune-compromised individuals (opportunistic fungal pathogens). Since risk factors for opportunistic fungal infections continue to increase in frequency, it is

likely that the incidence of opportunistic fungal infections will continue to increase in the future. An increase in opportunistic fungal infections is the result of an increase in the number of immune-compromised patients, thereby threaten the achievement of the newest medical advances in cancer care, solid organ and hematopoietic stem cell transplantation, neonatal medicine, autoimmune disease therapies, trauma and intensive care, and sophisticated surgery [2]. Fungi can cause infections ranging from easily treatable superficial type to life-threatening invasive infections and it has the capability to infect humans of all age groups [3]. Particularly, yeasts are the most common cause of fungal infections, leading to a range of life-threatening invasive diseases such as blood stream Candidiasis, pneumonia, and *Cryptococcal* meningitis to non-life-threatening mucocutaneous Candidiasis such a, vulvovaginal Candidiasis, and oropharyn-

geal Candidiasis [4]. They are also important cause of superficial mycosis such as onychomycosis [5]. Among fungal infections, blood stream Candida infection (candidemia) and Cryptococcosis are commonly associated with high morbidity and mortality rate. For example, Candida species are among the top ten pathogens causing bloodstream infections resulting in significant increase in the length of patients' hospitalization and in healthcare costs [4].

Currently, there are more than 150 known species of Candida [3], and more than 17 different Candida species are known as etiological agents of human infection [13]. Among Candida, *Candida albicans* is the most common infectious agent. However, there has been an important shift to non-albicans Candida species. The aim of this study was to determine distribution profile of yeasts particularly of Candida species recovered from different clinical samples collected from patients referred for culture testing by using the VITEK 2 compact system.

Methods and Materials

Study Area, Study Design and Period

The study was conducted at Arsho Medical laboratory, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. A cross sectional study was conducted from January 01, 2018 to September 30, 2018.

Sample Collection

All samples were collected according to standardized operating procedures. Clinical samples including oropharyngeal swabs, nail scrapings, corneal scrapings, and vaginal swabs were collected from patients with signs and symptoms of infections and referred to the study site for culture and susceptibility testing. A portion of each clinical specimen was inoculated onto bacteriological culture media for routine activity and incubated at the appropriate temperature and period according to standard protocols related to each sample. The other portion of each clinical samples were inoculated on to Sabouraud dextrose agar (Oxoid, Basingstoke, UK) to which 50µg/1ml gentamicin is incorporated. Inoculated sample were kept at least 72 hours a temperature of 370 C. Yeast isolates were transferred to tryptic soya broth with 20% glycerol and transport to the Ethiopian Public Health Institute National reference laboratory of Clinical Bacteriology and Mycology case team, which is an ISO 15189 accredited laboratory, and stored at minus 80°C deep freezer until used.

Identification

Identification testing was performed by YST card through VITEK 2 system. A study in 2007 demonstrated of 750 clinical yeast isolates to check the performance of VITEK 2 YST identification card was evaluated by compared to the RapID Yeast Plus system using 16S rRNA sequence analysis was used as the reference method ,98.2% of isolates were correctly identified to the species level by the VITEK 2 system [14], So this study confirmed VITEK 2 system is rapid and accurate methods for identification of yeast species [2].

The viability of yeast original cultures were checked by plating yeast colonies on Sabouraud dextrose agar (Oxoid, Basingstoke,UK). Yeast identification testing were determined by

the automated VITEK 2 compact system (bioMérieux, France) using YST-21343. The inoculums suspensions for the VITEK 2 were prepared in sterile saline at a turbidity equal to a 2.0 McFarland standard, as measured using a Densichek instrument (bioMérieux). The YST-21343 were automatically filled with the prepared culture suspension, sealed, and incubated by the VITEK 2 instrument. The cards were incubated at 35.5 °C for 18 h, and data were collected at 15-min intervals during the entire incubation period and final identification testing results were obtained in approximately 18 h or less. The final profile results were compared with the database, and the identification of the unknown organism was obtained. A final identification of excellent, very good, good, acceptable, or low- discrimination was considered correct.

Quality Assurance

Expiry date of media, VITEK card of YST, sterility and performance of media and VITEK card checked and a standard protocol was followed. Specimens were collected following SOPs and processed in Arsho microbiology laboratory. Isolates were transported to the laboratory of Ethiopian public health institution national reference laboratory of clinical bacteriology and mycology as soon as possible after identify isolates for further identification test. Pre-test was done before regular data collection was started. For performance, check VITEK 2 Compact system tested by using Standard strains of *Candida albicans* ATCC 10231 before any isolate tested. Reference strains for quality control were passed. Quality of the data were maintained by coding the isolates with unique number and finally all clinical isolates were preserved in deep freeze using 20% glycerol with trypticase soya broth (TSY) in case needed or for future further investigation. Data were checked for completeness before analysis.

Data Processing and Analysis Results were compiled and entered in to SPSS version 20 Software and were analyzed to determine Frequency, percentage and compare distribution of each etiologic agent by anatomic site of infection was calculated involved.

Ethical Consideration

All ethical considerations and obligations duly addressed, and the study conducted after the approval of the department of research and ethical review committee (DRERC) of the department of Medical Laboratory Sciences. Written informed consent obtained from the participants before data collection. Each respondent provided the right to refuse to take part in the study and to withdraw at any time during the study period. All the information obtained from the study subjects coded to maintain confidentially. When the participants found to be positive for fungal pathogen, they informed to the hospital clinician and received proper treatment. An assent form completed and signed by a family member and/or adult guardian for participants under the age of less than 18 years.

Results

A total of 645 samples from different body sites, which consisted of 200 vaginal, 151 corneal, 194 nail and 100 Oropharyngeal were

collected and evaluated for yeast species distributions. As shown in Table 1, 174 yeasts recovered of which 51.1% (89/174) were *Candida albicans*, 43.1% (75/174) were non-albicans *Candida* species and 5.7% (10/174) were yeasts other than *Candida* species. From 174 isolates were identified from different clinically suspect a fungal infection, the frequency of isolate from vaginal specimen highest 50% (87/174) followed by Oropharyngeal 28.7% (50/174), Nail 14.3% (25/174) and Eye 6.9% (12/174).

Yeast species with major *Candida* species identified in different quantity of distribution. The most commonly isolated species were: *Candida albicans* 51.1% (89/174) followed by *Candida krusei* 7.5% (13/174), *Candida famata* 6.9% (12/174), *Cryptococcus laurentii* 4% (7/17), *Candida rugosa* 2.2% (4/174), *Candida lusitanae* 5.2% (9/174), each of *Candida parapsilosis* and *Candida lipolytica* 3.4% (6/174), each of *Candida dubliniensis*

, *Candida kefyr*, *Candida guilliermondii* 2.9% (5/174), each of *Cryptococcus neoformans* and *Candida ciferrii* 1.1% (2/174) and *Candida pelliculosa* 2.3% (4/174) and other yeast species 2.8% (5/174).

Candida albicans were the main isolate in all specimen type whereas in nail the highest isolates were *Candida famata* followed *Candida albicans* and *Cryptococcus laurentii* with equal frequency

C. krusei 17.1% (13/75), *C. famata* 16% (12/75), and *C. lusitanae* 12% (9/75) were the commonest isolates among non-albican candidia species. *Candida krusei* the main isolated in vaginal and *C. lusitanae* and *Candida famata* from all specimen recovered. Whereas, yeast fungal infections of the eye showing highest variability of non-albican candida species with equal frequency [Table 1].

Table 1: Species distribution of yeasts isolated from different clinical samples from January 2018 to September 2018 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Species	Clinical samples				
	Vaginal Discharge	Oropharyngeal	Nail	Eye Discharge	Total
<i>Candida albicans</i>	52	28	4	5	89
Sub-total					
<i>Non-albicans candida</i>					
<i>C. krusei</i>	11	0	0	2	13
<i>C. famata</i>	2	4	5	1	12
<i>C. guilliermondii</i>	0	3	1	1	5
<i>C. lipolytica</i>	2	4	0	0	6
<i>C. pelliculosa</i>	1	0	3	0	4
<i>C. intermedia</i>	0	0	1	0	1
<i>C. utilis</i>	0	1	0	0	1
<i>C. rugosa</i>	0	2	1	1	4
<i>C. glabrata</i>	2	0	0	0	2
<i>C. lusitanae</i>	3	2	3	1	9
<i>C. kefyr</i>	1	2	1	1	5
<i>C. dubliniensis</i>	5	0	0	0	5
<i>C. parapsilosi</i>	2	4	0	0	6
<i>C. ciferrii</i>	2	0	0	0	2
Sub total					
Other yeast					
<i>Cryptococcus laurenti</i>	3	0	4	0	7
<i>C. neoformans</i>	1	0	1	0	2
<i>Trichosporon mucoides</i>	0	0	1	0	1
Sub-total					
Grand Total	87	50	25	12	174

A non *Candida* yeast isolates from different clinical samples profile were *Cryptococcus neoformans*, *Trichosporon mucoides*, *Cryptococcus laurenti*. Among yeasts other than *Candida* species *Cryptococcus laurenti* represented 70% (7/10) this group of yeasts.

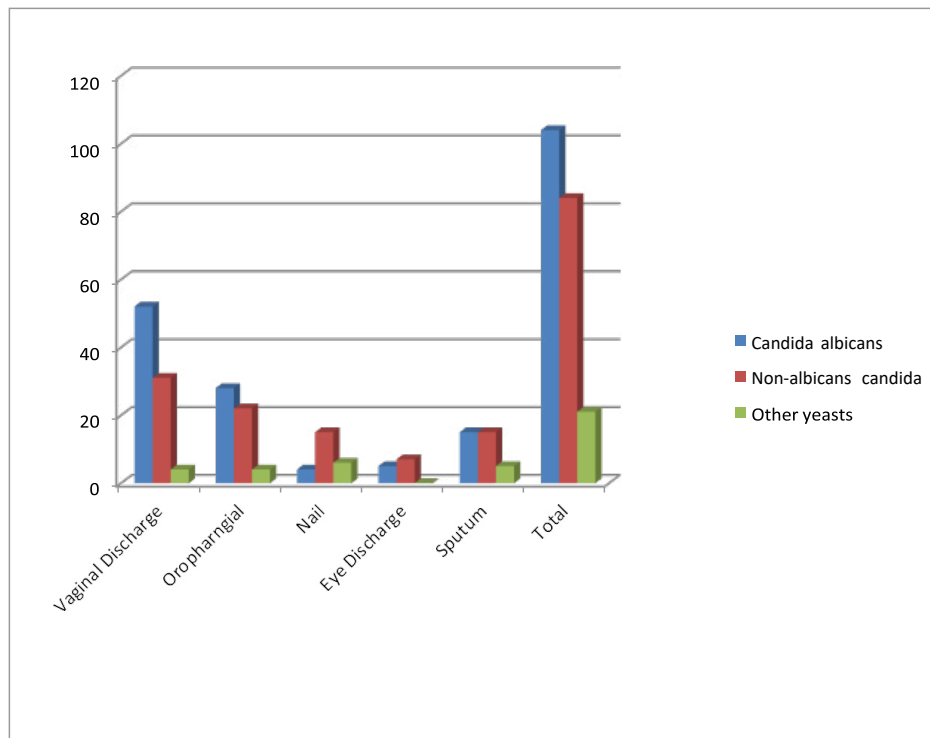


Figure 1: Frequency of *Candida albicans*, *non-albicans Candida* and other yeasts species from different clinical samples in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia from January, 2018 to September.

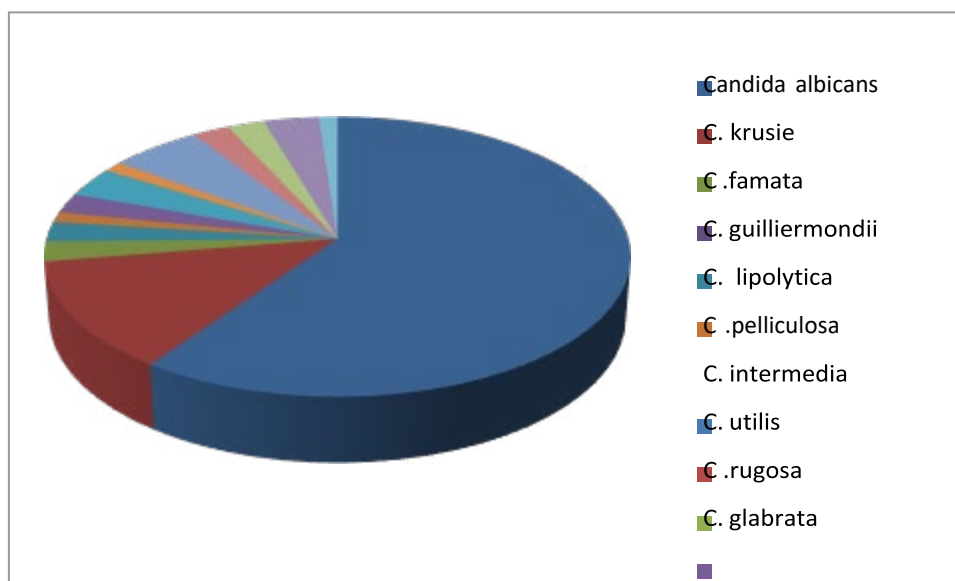


Figure 2: Species distribution of yeasts isolated from different clinical samples from January 2018 to September 2018 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Discussion

The incidence of opportunistic fungal infections such as *Candida* infections has considerably increased recently. Given the fact that many clinical microbiology laboratories in Ethiopia do not perform identification of yeasts beyond direct microscopy, accurate identification of *Candida* down to the species level is crucial. This is because different species have different antifungal susceptibility profiles and the incidence of non-albicans *Candida* is increasing. In the present study, the identification of yeasts down to the species level profile was determined in an automated manner by the VITEK 2 compact system that is re-

ducible and precise when compared with other reference methods [8-10]. Although the relative prevalence of the yeast species depends on the geographical location, patient population, and clinical settings [65], with a rise in immunosuppressive patients, an increased number of fungal infections is reported worldwide.

Simultaneously, the profile of human yeast pathogens has also been increasing [17]. Whereas, In Ethiopia little is known regarding the distribution and the *in vitro* antifungal susceptibility profile of yeasts isolated from patients. The different types of yeast species identified from clinical suspect vulvovaginal, oro-

pharyngeal, sputum, nail and eye fungal infection patient with major *Candida* species of yeast. These are *Candida albicans*, *Candida glabrata*, *Candida parapsilosis*, *Candida krusei*, *Candida guilliermondii*, *Candida lusitanae*, *Candida dubliniensis*, *Candida pelliculosa*, *Candida kefyr*, *Candida intermedia*, *Candida lipolytica*, *Candida famata*, *Candida rugosa*, and *Candida pelliculosa*, *Creptococcus laurentii*, *Creptococcus neoformans*, *Trichosporon mucoides*, *Candida ciferrii*. This result demonstrated a similar finding with previously published data, which was reported considered as a causative agent of fungal infection, worldwide [11, 6, 7].

There is no recognized information regarding the profile of yeast species from Ethiopian patient's similar results with this data. In the present study, 43.1% were non-albicans candida species, one report in Addis ababa, Ethiopia from a vaginal specimen demonstrated isolate of *Candida* species data showed similar to this result [9] [12]. The ratio between *C. Albicans* to non-albicans *Candida* species was being 1.2 to 1. Among non-Albicans *Candida* spp. *C. krusei* (13), *C. famata* (12), and *C. lusitanae* (9) were the predominant species. *C. albicans* and *C. krusei* as the "1st and 2nd" predominate species were similar with a study conducted in Ethiopia [9] [12], but *C. famata* and *C. lusitanae* two of the dominant species in the current study were not recovered at all by previous Ethiopian study [12], as well as in the world consider as rare finding the of human pathogen [6].

Occurrence rate of *Candida rugosa* 2.2 % (4/174) isolated from oropharyngeal, isolate followed by conical discharge and nail. These data result was higher while compare to Ghana isolates reported 0.7% of total *Candida* isolates (4/600), which is similar to the reported incidence of 0.6% worldwide. The variation arise may be due to regional and patient population of in this study [19] [13]. Clinically, species of the *C. rugosa* complex have been isolated from a range of sources including blood, urine, sputum, and swabs from different anatomical sites [20]. Members of the *Candida rugosa* species complex have been described as emerging fungal pathogens and are responsible for a growing number of *Candida* infections [21]. Studies are needed to better clarify the frequency of *Candida rugosa* infections in Ethiopian patients.

50 yeasts were recovered from 100 oropharyngeal specimen with predominant *Candida albicans* 56 % (28/ 50) isolated. It has great variation previously reported data in Ethiopia 81% [18] and Ghana 76.19% from HIV patients [15]. However, one study in China from patients in intensive care units (ICU) result comparable *Candida albicans* (40.1%) to this finding [11]. This deviation possibly arises from the study population difference and low number of sample size. In oropharyngeal, the incidence rate of non-albicans candida yeasts were around 44% (22/50) and other than non-*Candida* yeast was not found which is similar with previously study [18, 10]. 6.9 % (12/174) from total of isolate recovered from eye discharge with main isolate of *Candida albicans* and high variability of non-albicans *Candida* species with equal frequency of each 0.5% (1/174) that were *C. lusitanae*, *C. kefyr*, *C. rugosa*, *C. famata*, *C. krusei* and *C. guilliermondii*. Fungal keratitis is one of the most challenging types of infectious ker-

atitis, which has been gradually increasing during the past few decades. It now accounts for approximately 50% of infectious corneal diseases [22].

In the current study, the occurrence rate of non-candida yeast isolates were 5.7 % with highest frequency of *Cryptococcus laurentii* 4 % (7/174) followed by *Creptococcus neoformans* 1.1% (2/174) and *Trichosporon mucoides* 0.5% (1/209). *Cryptococcus laurentii* and *Trichosporon mucoides* are a rare human pathogen, but *Creptococcus neoformans* as typical fungal pathogen to immunocompromised [13]. When comparing these data of *Cryptococcus laurentii* 4 % to previously one study showed 0.6 % (1/155) recovered rate in Ethiopia from oropharyngeal [23].

All epidemiological papers of fungal diseases in Ethiopia were reviewed. Where there was no Ethiopia data align with this finding. Perhaps, by reason of these diseases are often understudied. *Cryptococcus laurentii* generally cause superficial to deep-seated infections in immunosuppressed patients. Other than *Cryptococcus neoformans* species have classically been considered to be non-pathogenic. However, *Cryptococcus albidus*, *Cryptococcus laurentii*, *Cryptococcus luteolus* *Cryptococcus uniguttulatus*, *Cryptococcus curvatus*, have emerged as opportunistic pathogens over the last few years [24]. They have been described as opportunistic pathogens in HIV positive individuals, as well as in patients with other predisposing factors [25]. *Creptococcus laurentii* has been implicated in 18 cases of opportunistic infection, predominantly of the skin, bloodstream, and central nervous system. Within the non-neoformans *Cryptococcal* species, *Cryptococcal laurentii* and *Cryptococcal albidus* account for 80% of pathogenic infections. Although *C. laurentii* is found worldwide and its natural habitat remains largely unknown [17, 26], the occurrence rate 4% of its current finding is higher.

Trichosporon spp are yeast-like fungi found in soil and water. Furthermore, they belong to the normal flora of the human skin and gastrointestinal tract. The first case of onychomycosis caused by *Trichosporon mucoides* was published in 2011 by Malini A et al [27]. An additional case was published in 2015 and 2016 by Capoor et al and Rizzitelli et al [28]. The published data showed *Trichosporon mucoides* a clinical significant isolate that is consider as human pathogen even if the occurrence of this fungi rare. Currently, this fungus is only one (1/25) *Trichosporon mucoides* recovered from nail that is agreeing from previously finding. However, clinical history of this patient was not evaluated. All epidemiological papers of fungal diseases in Ethiopia were reviewed. Where there was no Ethiopia data align with this finding. Perhaps, because of these diseases are often understudied.

In the last 20 years, a change has been observed in the rates of *Candida* species isolated from patients with Candidiasis. The incidence of *Candida albicans* has decreased, while that of the non-albicans *Candida* has increased. This may be because new antifungal agents and new therapeutic strategies such as antifungal prophylaxis, secondary prophylaxis, and preventative therapy have come into use [3]. The present study is the first report including other than *Candida* species in Ethiopia demonstrated

as species level by this amount and variance of yeast species.

This also explains incidence of *C. albicans* has decreased, while that of the non-*albicans* *Candida* and other yeast species has increased. Although the reason for the emergence of non-*albicans* *Candida* and other than *Candida* species in large proportion in this study is not clear, the precision of the identification method (VITEK 2 compact system) and use of antifungal drugs for prophylaxis and treatment empirically in Ethiopia could be possible explanations.

Conclusion

Eighteen (18) different type species of yeast were isolated with *C. albicans* the predominant species in all specimen types. The emergence of non-*albicans* *Candida* and other than *Candida* species yeast has increased. Importantly, knowledge of the species of pathogenic yeast is a useful guide to the probable pattern of susceptibility and for the successful treatment of patients. Therefore, epidemiological studies are required to determine the exact incidence and prevalence of these infections in a country's trends over time.

Availability of data and materials

The datasets used and/or analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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Ethics approval and consent to participate

The study was conducted after it was ethically reviewed and approved by the Ethical Review board of the Department of Medical Laboratory Sciences (DRERC), School of Health Sciences, and Addis Ababa University. Written Consents were also obtained from participants. Assent form was completed and signed by family member and/or adult guardian for participants under the age of 18 years.

Competing interests, the authors declare that they have no competing interests.

Consent for publication Not applicable.

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