

Cryptococcus in the Urine: We may not See it But it is Frequently there

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Clinical Image

A 57-year-old man kidney transplant recipient was admitted to the hospital for severe headache and respiratory symptoms. During routine urinalysis, yeasts were seen in the urine sediment and these were regarded as probable *Candida* species. Since the laboratory was informed by the attending clinician that the patient was immunosuppressed, urine was stained with China ink and revealed the presence of budding yeast-like capsular organisms, consistent with *Cryptococcus* sp. (Figure 1). Cryptococcosis was latter confirmed by serum latex (titer >1:10,000) and by positive fungal culture in the cerebrospinal fluid.

The patient was treated with IV amphotericin B and had a good clinical response. Even though *Cryptococcus* sp. can be frequently recovered from the urine (urine sediment analysis can be a decoy), most laboratories will not investigate for the presence of *Cryptococcus* unless they are requested to.

Performing China Ink in routine laboratories dealing with samples from immunocompromised patients could allow for an early diagnosis of disseminated cryptococcosis. This is a fast and low-cost procedure, allowing for the fungal visualization within 1-2 minutes.

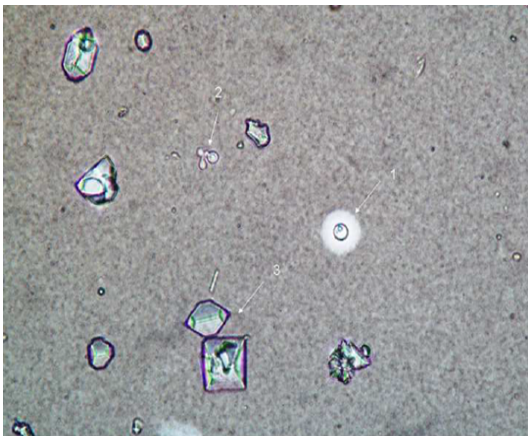


Figure 1: Urine sediment stained with China ink. Bright field microscopy. Original magnification 400x. Arrow 1 (*Cryptococcus* sp.), arrow 2 (*Candida* sp.) and arrow 3 (Triple phosphate crystals).

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