

## Havana meeting on the Neglected Tropical Fungal Disease Chromoblastomycosis, calls on Public Health authorities to take action

Havana, 12/12/2017 - Alongside the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Cuban Tropical Medicine Institute, 200 scientists and doctors sought common actions to reduce the stigmatizing burden of chromoblastomycosis. This persistent and progressive fungal infection is the result of trivial injury, usually on the leg or arm, and recently recognised by the World Health Organisation (WHO) as a Neglected Tropical Disease (NTD). Untreated for months or years, patients develop cauliflower like growths which are difficult to eradicate.



Chaired by Dr. María T. Illnait-Zaragozi, Cuba and Professor Flavio Queiroz-Telles, Brazil, an international group of speakers overviewed all aspects of the disease. Chromoblastomycosis is widely distributed, even occurring in temperate zones on occasion. Many countries have yet to report cases, especially in Africa, indicative of a lack of diagnostic capacity. The fungi that cause it, have highly characteristic appearances in tissue, if sought, but are slow to grow in culture and can be difficult to identify. New and rapid molecular tests are being pioneered in Madagascar where the disease appears to be especially common. Treatment is partially effective, but long term and unaffordable for most patients.

A final session addressed the public health issues with contributions the Global Action Fund for Fungal Infections (GAFFI). Capturing epidemiology data, in some countries linked with mycetoma and sporotrichosis, was extensively discussed and plans agreed for China, Mexico, Cuba and Ecuador. A definition of chromoblastomycosis for public health efforts was agreed: 'Chromoblastomycosis is a chronic (>3 months) cutaneous and subcutaneous fungal infection manifesting with verrucous, nodular and plaque lesions, depicting muriform fungal cells on microscopy.'



Professor Flavio Queiroz-Telles, one of GAFFI's ambassadors for Brazil, declared: "The inclusion of chromoblastomycosis with mycetoma on the WHO's NTD list will directly support efforts to control this horrible and disfiguring disease. It dominates the lives of my patients with it, to the extent that some are ostracized from their communities. Better diagnosis and therapy and especially and earlier recognition will have a substantial impact."

Professor David Denning, University of Manchester and President of GAFFI emphasized: "The community of physicians and researchers in chromoblastomycosis demonstrated their commitment to addressing the public health issues of the disease. In particular, they are keen to work with the WHO and its Regional Offices on establishing the burden of disease and developing prevention and diagnosis."

Dr. María T. Illnait-Zaragozi from the Instituto de Medicina Tropical "Pedro Kouri" said: "It was a unique opportunity to enhance our experience and I would also like to thank the International Society for Human and Animal Mycology (ISHAM) for supporting the meeting."

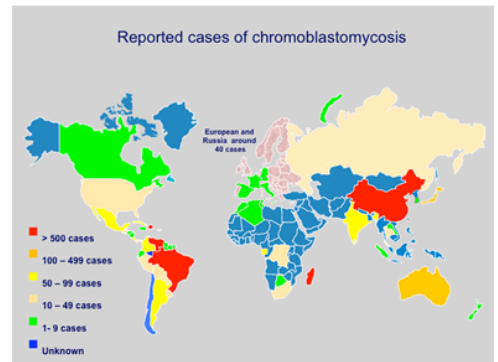
### Notes to Editors:

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The Global Action Fund for Fungal Infections (GAFFI) is a charitable foundation (NGO) focused on reducing deaths and illness caused by fungal disease. Fungal diseases are neglected worldwide by public health authorities. GAFFI efforts are directed at:

1. Identifying and publicising gaps in diagnostics and treatments for fungal diseases.
2. Consulting on how healthcare could be improved through facilitating training, encouraging companies to expand their markets and recommending improvements in infrastructure.
3. Estimating the burden of serious fungal diseases, country by country. Over 68 country estimates are complete, and many of these are published.
4. Influencing national and international agencies to 'adopt' fungal diseases alongside existing programs including TB, microbiology, AMR, NTDs and incorporation of key generic antifungals onto the WHO Essential Medicines List.
5. Focusing diagnostic improvements for GAFFI's priority diseases.

The Leading International Fungal Education (LIFE) aims to provide the latest information on the most common human pathological fungi, the diseases they cause and their diagnostics and treatment. LIFE is led by Professor David Denning who has been caring for patients with fungal infection for 30 years.



Map with reported cases of chromoblastomycosis

The International Society for Human and Animal Mycology (ISHAM) is a worldwide organisation that represents all clinician scientists, clinical scientists and researchers with interest in fungal diseases and fungus-like infections.

Luisa Morlano

Producer