

Health Care Leaders Remain Vigilant About New Superbug

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is calling the latest drug resistant fungus that has shown up in Illinois “a serious global health threat.”

It’s called [Candida auris](#) and there are more than 150 confirmed cases, mostly in nursing homes in the Chicago area.

Lori Grooms, OSF HealthCare Director of Infection Prevention and Control said for the average person who is healthy has a lesser chance of having any ill effects from C. auris. Infection Prevention staff throughout the United States have been tracking, watching and preparing.

Illinois Numbers

Grooms says there are 154 clinical cases in Illinois to date, with another four suspected cases, according to the latest briefing from the Illinois Department of Public Health. Some people can have the disease but show no signs and so they can unknowingly infect others.

Those at risk for infection are mostly in long term care or have compromised immune systems requiring frequent contact with health care, such as persons who require mechanical ventilators to help with breathing or who have a tracheostomy (an opening made into their throat again to assist with breathing, many times requiring mechanical ventilation).

Characteristic	Percentage of Patients
Presence of IV device	77%
Wounds	67%
Feeding tube	59%
Urinary Catheter	53%
Tracheostomy	51%
Mechanically ventilated	50%

“We have been monitoring very closely for it. Infection preventionists at OSF HealthCare have reports they look at daily,” Grooms explained. OSF HealthCare also has a specialized microbiology lab in Peoria that serves health care facilities throughout the Ministry.

Dr. John Farrell, heads up the Peoria-based microbiology lab which is the System Lab for all OSF HealthCare providers. It can perform more sophisticated DNA testing to identify pathogens.

SOT-Dr. John Farrell, Director OSF System Lab in Peoria

Dr. Farrell agrees with Grooms that reducing over use of those powerful drugs is key to helping protect patients from C. auris.

“Ensure that we minimize their exposure to broad spectrum, powerful antibiotics ... the antibiotics I call “Gorillacillin.” (:09)

Farrell said, his lab can help care providers zero in on the source of an infection, rather than using broad spectrum antibiotics for treatment when the cause isn't known.

SOT-Dr. John Farrell, Director OSF System Lab in Peoria

“We also work together as a team to ensure that our advanced molecular diagnostics are used appropriately and that's what diagnostic stewardship is all about.” (:13)

Grooms said hospitals and labs in Illinois are required to report any suspected cases of C. auris or other infectious diseases to their local public health department. IDPH can arrange for additional testing at their state operated labs.

Grooms said when patients show up at any OSF HealthCare facility, they are screened against a state database for patients suspected of infections from extremely antibiotic resistant pathogens.

Contact precautions would be put in place including hand hygiene, and use of protective gowns and gloves. Rooms would be cleaned with bleach, considered one of the EPA-approved health care disinfectants. Grooms recommends asking questions of providers, especially for patients at risk such as, “How long does it (the line) need to be in?” “Do I still need it?” Grooms added, “Prompt removal of lines is very important, especially for patients in hospitals.”

[Frequently Asked Questions \(from Illinois Department of Public Health](#)