

Prevalence of Non-Dermatophyte Molds in Patients with Abnormal Nails

Background: Patients with abnormally-looking nails, while clinically suggestive of onychomycosis, often yield negative cultures for dermatophytes or pathogenic yeasts. In many of those cases, colonization by nondermatophyte molds is frequently observed.

Aim: This study was carried out to estimate the prevalence of nondermatophyte molds in Egyptian patients presenting clinically with abnormal nails.

Patients & Methods: From 32 cases (14 males and 18 females) with different nail abnormalities, nail clippings and nail scrapings were obtained. Both microscopic examination (20% potassium hydroxide mounts) and culture on Sabouraud's dextrose agar medium with and without cycloheximide were used for species identification.

Results: Non-dermatophyte molds were isolated from 19 cases (59.4%). Members of the genus *Aspergillus* were the commonest among them (47%). Dermatophytes were detected in only five patients (15.6%), including species of *Microsporum canis* and *Trichophyton violaceum*. Yeasts were isolated in only three patients (9.4%), whereas 15.6 % did not grow any fungus in culture.

Conclusion: This study suggests that nails rendered abnormal by various pathologies are frequently colonized by non-dermatophyte molds, and that the prevalence may vary according to the environment or geographic distribution. They should not be overlooked when evaluating such cases with nail abnormalities.