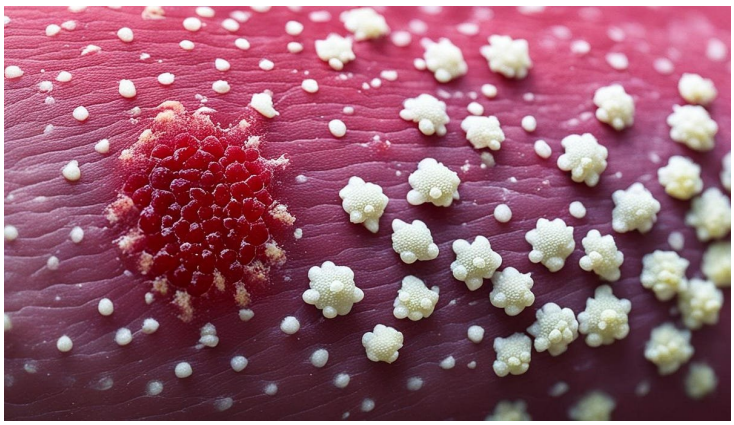
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WHO issues first-ever reports on tests and treatments for fungal infections

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Health workers often have insufficient knowledge about fungal infections as well as the impact of fungi growing more resistant to treatments



World Health Organization (WHO) has published its first-ever reports addressing the critical lack of medicines and diagnostic tools for invasive fungal diseases, showing the urgent need for innovative research and development (R&D) to close these gaps.

The fungi in the top ‘critical priority’ category of the WHO’s fungal priority pathogens list (FPPL) are deadly, with mortality rates reaching as high as 88%. Advancements in treatments mean that more people are likely to be living with immunocompromised conditions, which also could mean increases in cases of invasive fungal diseases. This is a complex challenge to manage due to inaccessibility of diagnostic tools, limited availability of antifungal medicines, and a slow and complex R&D process for new treatments.

WHO’s report on antifungal drugs highlights that, in the past decade, only four new antifungal drugs have been approved by regulatory authorities in the United States of America, the European Union or China. Currently, nine antifungal medicines are in clinical development to use against the most health-threatening fungi, as detailed in the FPPL.

However, only three candidates are in phase 3, the final stage of clinical development, meaning few approvals are expected within the next decade.

The new diagnostics report shows that while commercially available tests exist for fungal priority pathogens, these rely on well-equipped laboratories and trained staff, which means that most people in in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) do not benefit from them. All countries, but particularly LMICs, need faster, more accurate, cheaper and easier testing for a broad range of fungal priority pathogens, including diagnostic tools that can be used at or near point-of-care.