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## RESEARCH ARTICLE

### EVALUATION OF CANDIDA ISOLATES FROM THE SALIVA SAMPLES OF HIV SEROPOSITIVE PATIENT

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#### ABSTRACT

**Aim:** To assess the presence of candida isolates from saliva samples of HIV sero-positive patients.

**Objectives:** To study the expression of different species of candida isolates from saliva samples of HIV sero-positive patients and to identify if any newer species candida is present in the saliva samples of HIV sero-positive patients.

**Materials and Method:** 30 subjects with recently detected HIV sero-positive status and not undergoing Anti-Retroviral Therapy were selected. 0.5 ml of saliva samples were collected in the sterile bottles from these patients. These samples were sent to the laboratory within 2 hours of collection for further microbiological study. Germ tube test, morphology on Cornmeal Agar, Sugar Fermentation tests and Sugar Assimilation tests were used for identification of isolates and their species. Rapid identification for yeast fungi was also done by means of Autoscan 4 rapid yeast identification panel.

**Results:** Of 30 patients analyzed, 16 (53%) were *C. albicans*, 5 (31%) were *C. tropicalis*, 2 (13%) *C. lusitaniae*, *C. guilliermondii* and *Tricosporon beigeli*, 1(6%) *C. glabrata*, *C. krusei*, *Rhodotorula rubra* and *Zygomycetes mucor* species. It is evident from our study that *Candida albicans* and Non- *albicans* species of *Candida* are commensal organisms of the oral cavity. They tend to become pathogenic in immunocompromised HIV-sero-positive patients. They are responsible for Oropharyngeal Candidiasis in these individuals. These organisms show a change in susceptibility pattern to various anti-fungal drugs available. So it is necessary to know the causative *Candida* Isolate so that an appropriate treatment for Oropharyngeal Candidiasis in HIV-sero-positive patients can be given.

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## INTRODUCTION

The human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) is a lentivirus that causes the Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS), a condition in humans in which progressive failure of the immune system allows life-threatening opportunistic infections and cancers to thrive. HIV infects vital cells in the human immune system such as helper T cells (specifically CD4+ T cells), macrophages and dendritic cells. HIV infection leads to low levels of CD4+ T cells through a number of mechanisms including: apoptosis of uninfected bystander cells, direct viral killing of infected cells and killing of infected CD4+ T cells. When CD4+ T cell numbers decline below a critical level, cell-mediated immunity is lost and the body becomes progressively more susceptible to opportunistic infections (Jonathan Weber, 2013). Oropharyngeal candidiasis (OPC) is the most frequent opportunistic fungal infection among human immunodeficiency virus (HIV)-infected patients (Sharon Walmsley *et al.*, 2001). OPC is frequently complicated by esophageal candidiasis, which may limit food consumption and

lead to weight loss, threatening the general health and well-being of HIV-infected patients. Furthermore, clinical and in vitro resistance to antifungal azoles frequently occurs in OPC when CD4 cell counts fall to 200 cells/ cubic mm of blood, either by selection or acquisition of resistant strains of *Candida albicans* or by infection with inherently resistant species of *Candida* other than *C. Albicans* (Jeannette Guarner and Mary Brandt, 2011; Rachana Prabhu, 2013; Sardi Scorzoni *et al.*, 2013). Oral burdens of *C. albicans* are augmented in HIV-infected patients even prior to the first episode of OPC and the intensity of carriage increases significantly in the progression from asymptomatic *Candida* carrier to an episode of OPC. These observations indicate that normal defenses against *Candida* are perturbed early in the progression of HIV infection before any marked depletion of CD4 cells has occurred (Prasanna Kumar Rao, 2012). *C. albicans* and other species of *Candida* are found in 40% of healthy humans. However, colonization often leads to opportunistic mucosal or life-threatening deep organ infection in immune-compromised hosts. The majority of patients (77 to 100%) with OPC are infected with *C. albicans*, while the remaining patients are infected with one or more non- *albicans* species of *Candida*,

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either alone or in combination with *C. albicans*. A diversity of non-*albicans* species of *Candida* are found, including *Candidatropicalis*, *Candida parapsilosis*, *Candida guilliermondii*, *Candidaglabrata*, and *Candida dubliniensis*. However, among these species only *C. dubliniensis* has been specifically associated with and recognized as the sole cause of OPC in HIV infection (Krcmery and Barnes, 2002; Aarti Mane *et al.*, 2010; Akpan, and Morgan, 2014). The diagnosis of candidiasis is based on clinical signs and symptoms, laboratory testing, and the response to antifungal treatment. Laboratory tests include smears from the lesions using Gram's stain or a potassium hydroxide preparation or cultures from the skin, mouth, vagina, urine, sputum, or stool (Aarti Mane *et al.*, 2010). A culture is obtained if identification of the species or strain is desired. Studies have shown that high colony counts of *Candida* species in saliva collections correlate with the presence of clinical infection, and quantitative counts may be used in diagnosis (Cyril Enwonwu and Valli Meekst, 1996; Usha Arora *et al.*, 2003; Jair Leao and Camila Riberio, 2009). With the emergence of other species of *Candida* as pathogens and a development of change in the susceptibility pattern of the *C. albicans*, as well as the newer species of *Candida*, it is necessitating the isolation and identification of the causative species. The present study is undertaken to identify the *Candida* Isolates in saliva samples of HIV sero-positive patients (Deborah Greenspan and John Greenspan, 1996).

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

30 subjects with recently detected HIV sero-positive status and not undergoing Anti-Retroviral Therapy were selected. 0.5 ml of saliva samples were collected in the sterile bottles from these patients. These samples were sent to the laboratory within 2 hours of collection for further microbiological study. Germ tube test, morphology on Cornmeal Agar, Sugar Fermentation tests and Sugar Assimilation tests were used for identification of isolates and their species. Rapid identification for yeast fungi was also done by means of Autoscan 4 rapid yeast identification panel.

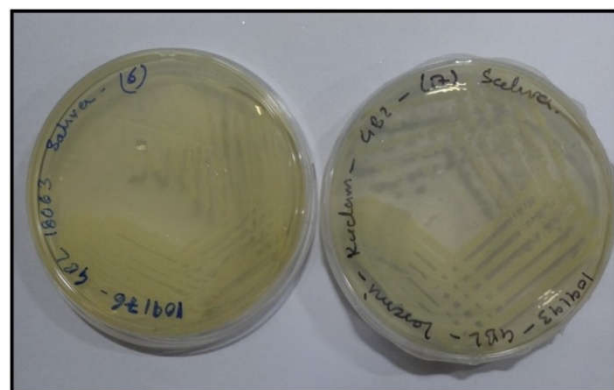
## RESULTS

Thirty patients diagnosed with HIV and not receiving ART were enrolled in this longitudinal study. Out of thirty patients, 3 were male patients and 27 were female patients. The average age was 36.3 years. Of 30 patients analyzed, 16 (53%) were *C. albicans*, 5 (31%) were *C. tropicalis*, 2 (13%) *C. lusitanae*, *C. guilliermondii* and *Trichosporon beigelii*, 1(6%) *C. glabrata*, *C. krusei*, *Rhodotorularubra* and *Zygomycetes mucor* species.

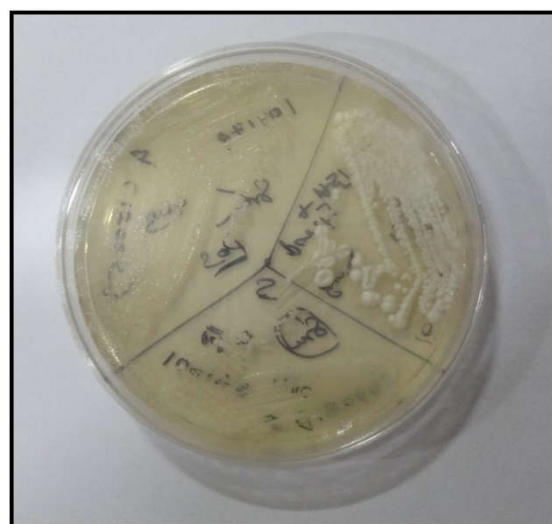
## DISCUSSION

In recent years, incidence of mycotic infections has increased due to increase in number of patient with immunosuppressive viral infections (Changdeo Aher, 2014). Among these infections Candidiasis is most common in this group of patients. Oropharyngeal candidiasis (OPC) is a common feature associated with HIV infection (Deorukhkar *et al.*, 2014). Oropharyngeal candidiasis occurs in approximately up to 90% of HIV infected cases during the course of infection.<sup>65</sup> It is also considered as an important marker of HIV and its progression (Aarti Mane *et al.*, 2010). Oropharyngeal candidiasis increases morbidity and also negatively affects the quality of life of HIV infected patients.

Several *Candida* species are known to colonize the human oropharyngeal tract, with *Candida albicans* colonization occurring most frequently.



Cream coloured colonies of *Candida* Isolates on Sabouraud dextrose agar



Cream coloured colonies of *Candida* Isolates (*C. tropicalis*) on Sabouraud dextrose agar



*Rhodotorula rubra* – reddish orange colonies  
*Trichosporon beigelii* – cream coloured colonies



Zygomycetes / Mucor species



Candida Krusei

These yeasts are usually commensals but may act as opportunistic pathogens. Colonization does not always lead to infection; however, it is a prelude to infection when host immunity is compromised and the risk of a disseminated infection is high (Foluso Owotade *et al.*, 2013). Sardi *et al.* in 2013, concluded that the virulence of Candida species is attributed to certain factors like adherence, biofilm formation, and the production of tissue damaging extracellular hydrolytic enzymes. The biofilm formation plays an important role in pathogenesis. Recent evidence suggests that majority of disease produced by *C. albicans* is associated with biofilm growth. Deorukhkar *et al.* in 2014, studied that the extracellular hydrolytic enzymes like phospholipase and proteinase are important for colonization and invasion of host tissue (Sachin *et al.*, 2014). Although *Candida albicans* is considered to be most prevalent cause of mucosal and systemic infections, in recent years incidence of infections due to Non-albicans Candida species like *C. glabrata*, *C. tropicalis* and *C. krusei* has increased (Deorukhkar and Saini, 2014). Infection due to Non-albicans Candida species is clinically indistinguishable from that caused by *C. albicans*, but are more resistant to routinely used antifungal drugs (Changdeo Aher, 2014). Therefore, prompt identification of infecting species along with in vitro antifungal susceptibility testing is very important for prevention of emergence and spread of drug resistant Candida species (Deorukhkar and Saini, 2014).

According to, Changdeo Aherin 2014, *C. glabrata* is often the second or third most common cause of candidiasis after *C. albicans*. *C. glabrata* infections can be mucosal or systemic and are common in abnormal hosts (e.g., immunocompromised persons or those with diabetes mellitus). *C. glabrata* infections are difficult to treat and are often resistant to many azole antifungal agents, especially fluconazole. Consequently, *C. glabrata* infections have a high mortality rate in compromised, at-risk hospitalized patients. *C. glabrata* and *C. tropicalis* were the major isolates from NAC spp. The factors like the widespread use of immunosuppressive drugs and the emergence of HIV/AIDS have favored the increase of *C. glabrata* infections. Oropharyngeal Candidiasis due to *C. glabrata*, tends to be more severe and more difficult to treat. *C. tropicalis* was the second most common isolate from Non-albicans Candida species (Changdeo Aher, 2014). *Rhodotorula* species have emerged as opportunistic pathogens that have the ability to colonise and infect susceptible patients. *Rhodotorula* species are ubiquitous saprophytic yeasts that can be recovered from many environmental sources. Most of the cases of infection due to *Rhodotorula* in humans were fungemia associated with central venous catheter (CVC) use and associated with diseases like haematologic malignancies in patients who were receiving corticosteroids and cytotoxic drugs. Also seen in patients taking broad-spectrum antibiotics and immunosuppression.

Unlike fungemia, some of the other localised infections caused by *Rhodotorula*, including meningeal, skin, ocular, peritoneal, and prosthetic joint infections (Fernanda Wirth and Luciano Goldani, 2012). Thus, from the results of our study, it is evident that *Candida albicans* and Non-albicans species of *Candida* are commensal organisms of the oral cavity. They tend to become pathogenic in immunocompromised HIV-seropositive patients. They are responsible for Oropharyngeal Candidiasis in these individuals. These organisms show a change in susceptibility pattern to various anti-fungal drugs available. So it is necessary to know the causative *Candida* Isolate so that an appropriate treatment for Oropharyngeal Candidiasis in HIV-seropositive patients can be given. This present study is an eye-opener for the importance of evaluation of *Candida* Isolates in saliva samples of HIV-seropositive patients as, the yeast species not found in oral cavity are also seen to become opportunistic pathogens invading the oral cavity of these immunocompromised patients.

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