

Nearly half of adults with Cystic Fibrosis are infected by fungi

June 30 2014, by Susan Osborne



"Clubbing" of the fingers is a classic features of Cystic Fibrosis, although not present in many patients. Credit: Jerry Nick, M.D./ Wikipedia

A medical student from Manchester had made a major discovery which will help doctors diagnose and treat patients with Cystic Fibrosis (CF) while working with a University of Manchester led team at the University Hospital of South Manchester.

Jo Armstead spent hundreds of hours accessing data from 30 countries to discover that there are over 75,000 people with the [genetic disorder](#), of whom half are over 18 years with 50 per cent infected by the fungus, Aspergillus.

She spent last summer holidays working with Professor Denning, Director of the NHS National Aspergillosis Centre and Professor of Infectious Diseases in Global Health in the Faculty's Institute of Inflammation and Repair, and the team at the University Hospital of South Manchester where what started out at a summer project has led to publication in a prestigious journal.

The student, who is in her third year at Newcastle University Medical School, said: "It has been really great to be involved in the first project of its kind ever done, with dramatic results and real opportunities for better health in young CF sufferers."

Professor Denning, explained: "The life expectancy of people with CF has been increasing, but aspergillosis has a major negative impact on many.

"By painstakingly crunching the numbers, Jo has helped us better understand the scale of the challenge which will lead to better diagnostics and treatment strategies. There will be many patients who over the coming years will be grateful to Jo and her work."

When she qualifies, Jo is considering a career in acute medicine with expedition medicine to combine her passions for the outdoors and travelling but, for the moment, she is studying hard for exams next month.

Registries for CF have been ongoing for years, but never before has the problem infection aspergillosis been accurately determined. The UK has

the second highest number of adult CF sufferers (5,290), second only to the USA (13,657).

Aspergillosis causes the airway infection, bronchitis, and allergy, known as ABPA, which starts in childhood and reaches a peak in late teenage years. Treatment involves [antifungal therapy](#) or oral steroids, but is not yet demonstrated to be very effective, with antifungal resistance emerging.

More information: Armstead J, Morris J, Denning DW (2014) "Multi-Country Estimate of Different Manifestations of Aspergillosis in Cystic Fibrosis." *PLoS ONE* 9(6): e98502. [DOI: 10.1371/journal.pone.0098502](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0098502)

Provided by University of Manchester

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