

## **Drug Shortage** - Call for Improved Access to Vital Drug against Invasive Fungal Infections

Scientists from Cologne criticise the severely limited availability of flucytosine, which requires urgent action by authorities and the pharmaceutical industry. Under the leadership of Professor Dr Oliver A. Cornely from CECAD Cluster of Excellence for Ageing Research, the problem was addressed in a commentary published in The Lancet Regional Health - Europe

[\[https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2666776223000777\]](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2666776223000777) in cooperation with the hospital pharmacy and the microbiology department of the University Hospital of Cologne (UHC).

Cornely and his team conduct research at the European Centre of Excellence for Invasive Fungal Infections, and treat patients at the University Hospital Cologne. With their expertise in fungal infections, they also advise doctors from all over Germany on difficult cases on a daily basis. "Most of the patients are seriously ill people with a weakened immune system. A fungal infection that is not treated can quickly become life-threatening in these cases," explains Dr Rosanne Sprute from Cornely's working group. Invasive fungal infections are rare and cannot be compared with the harmless, many familiar external diseases, such as foot or nail fungus.

Flucytosine, originally developed in the 1950s as a cancer drug, is central to the treatment of several invasive fungal infections and has been classified as an essential drug by the WHO. "Numerous studies have proven that flucytosine is an irreplaceable treatment option even for hard-to-treat pathogens and can save lives," says Cornely.

Access to flucytosine has not been guaranteed for decades in many countries in Africa, South America and Asia, where cryptococcal infections in particular pose a serious threat. What is new, however, is that the supply shortage of flucytosine has also reached Europe. "For two years now, European pharmacies have been working with remaining stocks," criticises Sprute. "This is no longer acceptable for our patients," agrees Prof. Cornely. "There is an urgent need for action. Authorities and pharmaceutical industry have to ensure the production and distribution of this vital drug."

### **Media Contact:**

Professor Dr Oliver A. Cornely

CECAD, Faculty of Medicine, University of Cologne and University Hospital Cologne

+49 221 478-85523

[oliver.cornely@uk-koeln.de](mailto:oliver.cornely@uk-koeln.de)

@CornelyOliver

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/oliver-a-cornely-7859b747/>

### **Press and Communications Team:**

Dr Janina Leckler

+49 221 478-67664

[janina.leckler@uk-koeln.de](mailto:janina.leckler@uk-koeln.de)