Nearly half of patients with coccidioidomycosis (Valley fever) experience delays of at least one month before being diagnosed.

A recent study highlights the importance of increased attention and appropriate testing for those living in, and traveling to, areas where the fungal infection is endemic (Emerg Infect Dis 2019;25[9]:1742-1744).

“Current clinical practice where Valley fever is highly endemic is far from perfect,” said John N. Galgiani, MD, a professor of medicine in infectious diseases at the University of Arizona College of Medicine–Tucson.

Data from the NextGen electronic health record program was used to survey Valley fever cases at clinics operated by Banner Health and located in the Phoenix area. The system was searched for all patients at least 18 years of age who received International Classification of Diseases, 9th Revision codes for coccidioidomycosis from Jan. 1, 2011, through Dec. 31, 2014. Diagnoses were corroborated by a programmatic identification of any positive coccidioidal serological test result more than 30 days before or 60 days after the date of diagnosis.

Newly diagnosed Valley fever infections were identified in 139 patients. Of the 119 patients with an identified presentation date, 16 (13%) received a diagnosis on the day of presentation, 24% within one week of first presentation, 46% within one month, and 54% from 30 days to six months after presentation—meaning that 46% of patients had a delay of more than one month before diagnosis.

A companion study focused on the Tucson area had similar findings (Emerg Infect Dis 2019;25[9]:1745-1747).

“This delay results in antibiotic treatments for no benefit and extensive medical costs that would be unneeded if the true diagnosis was discovered,” Dr. Galgiani said. “Both articles indicate that doctors should test for Valley fever sooner in the appropriate clinical setting.”
Dr. Galgiani also noted that testing should be conducted nationwide for patients with recent (less than one month) travel to endemic regions including Phoenix, Tucson, Bakersfield and elsewhere in the Southwest.

“Valley fever could be diagnosed sooner if clinicians thought of the diagnosis,” Dr. Galgiani added. “In the endemic region, a third of pneumonia is Valley fever. With something that common, it should be looked for commonly.”

Link: [https://www.idse.net/Fungal-Infection/Article/08-19/Valley-Fever-Diagnoses-Often-Delayed/55826](https://www.idse.net/Fungal-Infection/Article/08-19/Valley-Fever-Diagnoses-Often-Delayed/55826)