

Fatal Fungus - fungal contamination of a probiotic used for preterm infants

In October 2014, a fatal case of gastrointestinal mucormycosis was reported in a preterm infant in a hospital in Connecticut USA. Mucormycosis is a rare infection caused by mold in the gastrointestinal tract from a fungus called *Rhizopus oryzae*.

The source of infection was a contaminated dietary supplement called ABC Dophilus powder, used in NICUs for preterm infants. The product ABC Dophilus was recalled but this product was also distributed in other US States and in UK and Israel. It is also widely sold on the internet.

The US Centers for Disease Control, CDC, issued an emergency Health Advisory :

See : <http://emergency.cdc.gov/HAN/han00373.asp>

The fungus *Rhizopus oryzae* is a contaminant that can cause build-up of a heavy fungal burden ; this produces necrotic bowel symptoms similar to necrotizing enterocolitis, NEC.

Ironically, ABC Dophilus is intended to reduce NEC in preterm infants. The CDC Advisory describes this product: « It is marketed specifically for infants and children and claims to have 'probiotic' properties ... it is a product intended to contain viable microbial ingredients. » The CDC notes that these products are unregulated and recommends : « In considering the use of any dietary supplement, clinicians should consider that the Food and Drug Administration, FDA, does not regulate these products as drugs. »

IBFAN's questions : Why is it necessary to add dietary supplements of dubious value and which may be contaminated ? Why do NICUs fail to support and promote breastfeeding and breastmilk feeding, with their strong protective effect against NEC ? Breastmilk and colostrum are living fluids which contain live prebiotics and probiotics as well as anti-infective agents to protect babies against disease and strengthen the maturing immune system. **Read more :**

<http://ibfan.org/issue-scientific-breastfeeding> and <http://ibfan.org/issue-scientific-scientific>