

POLICYHOLDER ADVOCATE

SPECIAL COVERAGE: Mold and Meteorological Mayhem

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MOVE OVER CSI. CSI-Type Lab Brings New Proof to Mold Related Personal Injuries

Tests of urine, body fluids, and tissues can now identify a variety of toxins in the human body. Capabilities include matching the DNA from black molds from the environmental studies on the home or office to those found in the human body. Further, finding the toxin produced by the black molds in the home can also be matched to those found in the body. Not a happy day for the defense but perhaps now, the medical community will start recognizing the health effects and develop treatments for toxic mold exposure.

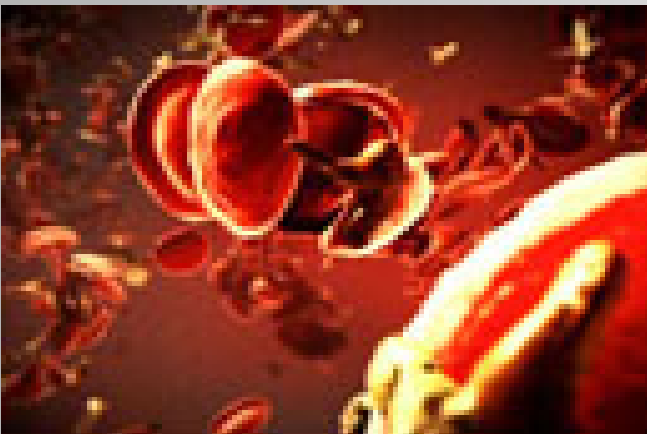
It's one of those bitter sweet moments: So many people have suffered from mold related disease and justice was snatched away from them because the legal burden of proof often could not have been met since not enough research had been conducted that proved mold **caused** the personal injuries. To top it off, the medical doctors refused to acknowledge the effects of mold and patients were left undiagnosed, misdiagnosed and certainly without proper treatment.

Too many such victims have fallen through the cracks and this injustice should sadden all of us.

Those days are gone. Today's victims have a new technology that can offer the proof needed to pursue the proper medical diagnosis, treatments and compensation for personal injuries sustained because of another's fraud, negligence, or other irresponsible behavior. .

POA sat down with the medical doctors running this new lab and got the entire exclusive scoop on this CSI-like technology.

In 1999, Dennis Hooper, M.D., Ph.D. was brought in on puzzling autopsies. Cardiopulmonary arrest was often ruled the cause of death among people who lived in a mold contaminated environments. Due to his background in infectious diseases he realized that a link between mold exposure and the cause of deaths in the cases that he was investigating could exist.



Travel with POA to the new lab that will remind you of an episode of CSI. The journey begins on this page.

MOVE OVER CSI...

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Over a period of 3 years, Dr. Hooper performed a number of autopsies where the cause of death was not readily apparent but the patient had high exposure to molds. Deaths would have otherwise been ruled as caused by cardiopulmonary arrest, respiratory arrest, and AIDS, and other common (and less investigated) causes of death.

At this time, there was not any methodology for the identification of mold infections in human tissues. Dr. Hooper set out on a quest to develop such methods. Through DNA technology that he was familiar with from his work as a microbiologist, he was able to perform testing that linked the cause of death to various mycotoxin-producing molds.

In 2004, Dr. Hooper teamed with Vincent Bolton, M.D., and they proceeded to validate the tests they developed in a CLIA-certified lab in Dallas, Texas. Since that time, they have filed patent applications covering their products and procedures, and started their own certified lab, **RealTime Laboratory**.

Rather than editorialize the conversation, POA is providing below the questions asked by POA president, Melinda Ballard, and the unedited responses provided by these MDs:

Q: For folks not too familiar with what has been labeled "toxic mold", please explain mycotoxins (the tiny poisons that are in certain mold species and can be detached from the spore, sent airborne and can be inhaled) and what each mycotoxin is known to cause.

R: Mycotoxins are substances produced by molds but are not essential for maintaining mold cells or their growth. They are believed to provide advantages for molds for assisting in invading the host tissue or helping to eliminate other competing organisms in the same environment.

Mycotoxins are documented to be destructive to cells and their membranes. They also interfere with vital process such as production of proteins, RNA and DNA.

Some common mycotoxins and the organisms that produce them are:

Aflatoxin: Produced by *Aspergillus flavus*, *Aspergillus parasiticus* and other *Aspergillus* species.

Ochratoxin: Produced by *Aspergillus ochraceus*, *Penicillium viridictum*

Trichothecene (also spelled **Tricothecene**): Produced by *Stachybotrys* spp., *Fusarium* sp., and *Trichoderma* sp.

These mycotoxins produce a variety of problems in humans. Here's a summary:

Aflatoxins are some of the most **potent carcinogens** known and have been linked to **kidney and liver cancers** as well as a wide variety of human health problems.

Ochratoxins damage kidneys and liver and is also a **suspected carcinogen**. There is evidence that it **impairs the immune system**.

Trichothecenes are known to cause **damage to the entire digestive tract** and can cause rapid **death due to internal hemorrhage**.

Some of these have been **implicated in hemorrhage in lungs, skin, and neurological systems**. There are other mycotoxins produced by these fungal elements that affect **reproductive organs, brain, and other tissues**.

Q: For which mycotoxins can your lab test?

R: Presently, RealTime Labs has validated aflatoxins, ochratoxins, and trichothecenes for testing in urine, nasal secretions, and body tissues. Tissues which have yielded the best results are liver, lung, brain (all from autopsy specimens) and skin. The tissues can be obtained from hospitals or labs which conducted the pathology examination of the biopsy or autopsy.

Tissues that have been embedded in paraffin (wax) are available for years after the

biopsy was done and can be tested. Patients can give written consent to those labs to release the tissue block or portions from the block to RealTime Labs.

Q: How do you test?

R: The trichothecenes are tested by using an ENZYME LINKED IMMUNO-SORBENT ASSAY (ELISA). This involves the same concept that is presently used in testing Hepatitis B and HIV testing.

This test involves a small plate that has many wells in it. The wells are coated with a specific antibody to a group of trichothecenes. The fluid or tissue extract is placed in the well and if a trichothecene is present it will bind to the antibody in the well. By adding other solutions, we can detect the presence of this binding by observing a color change. The degree of color change tells us the actual concentration of the mycotoxin.

Aflatoxins and Ochratoxins are tested in a sephadex column. This is a small column with antibodies attached to small beads in the column. The fluid is allowed to drip through the column. If a toxin is present, it will bind to the beads in the column. We then remove that portion of the toxin by dripping different solutions through the column which will then remove the aflatoxin or ochratoxin. These mycotoxins are then checked by fluorometry and a color change is observed. The actual concentration can then be reported.

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Q: What specimens can be tested?

R: Urine, nasal secretions, and tissue.

We are presently validating serum (from blood).

DNA evaluation for the existence of the actual fungus and ELISA and column evaluation for the existence of mycotoxins have been validated.

These same procedures are now in patent process and peer review manuscripts are being submitted to various medical journals.

Q: Are there time constraints to your testing? In other words, if a patient moves out of their contaminated home and a year passes before the doctor orders a test, will such testing be accurate?

A: It's been our experience that we can detect mycotoxins up to one year after the patient has been removed from the contaminated area.

Q: What is the cost of each test?

R: We currently offer two distinct groups of testing. One is for the identification of mold spores by DNA analysis; the second group of testing is the testing for different types of mycotoxins. We do testing for both medical and legal evaluations with the

results intended to be used for the diagnosis and/or treatment of a mold infection. Cost for testing varies due to number of tests ordered and whether this is only for diagnosis or for legal purposes as well.

As an example, a urine test for ten different Trichothecenes will cost **\$320.00** while a complete mycotoxin panel and total DNA panel for a legal case may cost **\$5,000..** So you can see that specific testing needs to be ordered based upon the patients needs.

Q: Those in the medical and/or research field who have the guts to stand up and further the medical understanding of mycotoxin exposure have been shut down, penalized, ridiculed, and demonized. None of the recent peer reviewed literature that shows mycotoxins are harmful when inhaled has been used in CDC, Inst. Of Medicine and other literature reviews. Nada. Zilch. There is even proof governmental agencies and lapdog legislators have buried the facts and sought to discredit researchers investigating mold.

Are you scared of any reprisals from government, industries and special interests groups like insurance, builders, realtors, commercial landlords and school boards that may have greater liability

because of your tests?

R: We saw a need and now we see even a greater need to help a group of very sick people. Some patients we have met since we have started our work are desperate for answers to their problems and for some form of treatment. Their stories are tragic both for the medical problems they have and how

the medical system has been unresponsive to their plight.

Certainly, at times we may feel uncertain about how our work will be accepted and how

others will react to what we do, but we have an obligation that we took on when we became physicians. We are trying to honor that commitment.

Q: How does a patient wanting one of these tests get it done? Is there a form that must be filled out and sent in by another doctor? Since this is a separate service from what a regular doctor provides, is pre-payment of the lab fee required?

R: Consult a doctor; one that is sympathetic to their condition or, if in litigation, the patient should consult with counsel about contacting someone for a medical evaluation. Patients need to be aware that since our testing is so new, some physicians may not want to order testing since they may not

NOTE: We also asked the obvious question:

So, with all of these autopsies you conducted where mold was the cause of death, are you going to publish the findings?

Dr. Hooper told POA that papers are currently being written and will be ready for publication within a month.

It can take up to a year or so for the "peer review" process to be completed. Be on the look out for peer reviewed medical research to be published that links certain molds to death.

know what to do with the results. If they have that problem, they will need to seek other professional help or have their doctor contact our staff for consultation.

There is a form to be filled out by the ordering physician. This form can be obtained directly from our offices or lab or by downloading that form off of POA's website.

Q: How do patients and their doctors reach you?

R: Our office phone numbers are: 214-764-1160. Our fax is 214-890-1198. Email is: mcmd@cox.net.

CVs of the MDs interviewed for this article are available. Email POA at: info@policyholdersofamerica.org and in the subject line write: LAB MDs CVs. We will email you their CVs immediately.

