

LA GENERAL MEDICAL CENTER LEADS U.S. PRACTICE CHANGE WITH SAFER, PATIENT-CENTERED TREATMENT FOR DEADLY FUNGAL MENINGITIS



Physicians at Los Angeles General Medical Center are the first U.S. hospital team to publish real-world evidence showing that a simpler, safer treatment for cryptococcal meningitis can improve patient care without compromising cure rates.

Serving some of the region's most medically complex and economically vulnerable patients, LA General frequently cares for individuals who face barriers to prolonged hospitalization, including unstable housing, limited transportation, and financial insecurity. In this setting, reducing unnecessary inpatient time is critical.

The study, published in JAMA Network Open, evaluated a newer treatment approach for cryptococcal meningitis, a life-threatening fungal infection that disproportionately affects people living with HIV. Traditional U.S. treatment requires weeks of hospitalization and repeated doses of amphotericin B, a medication known for serious kidney, liver, and metabolic side effects.

Building on results from a 2022 clinical trial conducted in Africa, LA General physicians adopted a simplified regimen using a single intravenous dose followed by oral antifungal therapy and evaluated outcomes in a real-world U.S. public hospital setting.

Patients receiving the new regimen experienced far fewer serious injuries (21% versus 62%), spent significantly less time hospitalized (a median of 7 days compared with 19 days), and achieved the same cure rates as those treated with standard therapy. They were also less likely to leave the hospital against medical advice and more likely to transition successfully to outpatient and long-term HIV care.

"We wanted to be sure this approach was right for our patients," said Rachel Baden, MD, Chief of Medicine at LA General Medical Center. "The evidence supported it, and our patients deserved to benefit."

"These results show how following the data can lead to safer, more practical care for the patients we serve," said Brad Spellberg, MD, Chief Medical Officer.

Together, the findings reinforce LA General's role in advancing research-driven care that improves outcomes while reducing the burden on patients and the healthcare system.