



The 2012 Fungal Meningitis Outbreak in the United States: Connections Between Soils and Human Health

Lynn Burgess and Eric Brevik

United States (eric.brevik@dickinsonstate.edu)

In September of 2012 the United States found itself facing a fungal meningitis outbreak that was traced back to contaminated steroid injections. The fungus *Exserohilium rostratum*, which is found in soil, among other locations in the environment, was identified as the main cause of the health issues created by the contaminated steroids. As of November 7, 2012 419 cases of fungal meningitis, stroke due to presumed fungal meningitis, or other central nervous system-related infections, 10 cases of peripheral joint infections, and 31 deaths linked to the contaminated steroids had been documented. However, the life cycle and soil ecology of *E. rostratum* is not well understood, and such knowledge would aid human health professionals in understanding the pathogenic potential of *E. rostratum*. Therefore, soil scientists have a role to play in developing the most effective ways to combat human health challenges such as the 2012 fungal meningitis outbreak.