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Fungal infection detector – UPM's latest invention

KUALA LUMPUR: University Putra Malaysia (UPM) has come out with a "Rapid Detection Kit For Life-Threatening Fungal Infections" which takes only five hours instead of three to seven days to get results.

Assoc Prof Dr Chong Pei Pei of UPM's Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences said the method she and her team devised could provide rapid detection and was highly sensitive and specific, thus reducing the time of diagnosis.

"Usually it will take three to seven days to detect the type of fungus infecting the

patient and the test is not accurate.

"But by using this kit, the time is cut to a mere five hours, and the specific fungus can be determined," she told reporters here Monday.

She said the early detection would greatly reduce the mortality rate of patients who are at risk since the right drug could be prescribed on time for effective treatment, based on the results obtained from the detection kit.

Dr Chong said the kit was able to detect the *Candida* species, a type of fungus which causes life-threatening

infections in humans.

"The *Candida* infections commonly occur in individuals with weak immune systems such as cancer patients, patients with blood disorders, post-surgery patients, HIV-positive and AIDS patients, premature newborns and elderly patients with underlying disorders," she added.

She said the fungus could cause infection in skin, nails, oral area, vagina and also cause nappy rash in babies,

"The worst infection is the one that involves internal organs and bloodstream. In

patients with weak immune system, the *Candida* species has the potential to invade all host organs," Dr Chong said.

She said the research started three years back and the product was patented in 2007.

"A Malaysian patent has been filed and this invention has won the bronze award in the UPM R&D Expo. We are now looking for an investor to market the kit which I believe can be applied in hospitals and private medical laboratories, not just in Malaysia but also worldwide" she said. – Bernama