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## IDENTIFICATION OF YEASTS OF CANDIDA SPECIES FROM PATIENTS WITH VULVOVAGINITIS IN THE AREA OF CARACAS, VENEZUELA

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Vaginal candidiasis is a fungal infection distributed around the world, produced by yeasts of the *Candida* species belonging to the vagina normal flora. Yeasts of the *Candida* species are found in 20 to 30% of all the cases of vulvovaginitis and *Candida albicans* is responsible of the great majority of cases. Notwithstanding, more recent studies show an increase of other *Candida* species producing this pathology. Some “no *albicans*” *Candida* species have the particularity to show resistance to the antifungal agents used for this pathology and for this reason, we should determine accurately the species involved in each case, to install the specific treatment. The objective of our study was to identify the species of *Candida* yeasts associated to cases of vulvovaginitis in patients from the metropolitan area of Caracas during the year 2003. We studied 35 samples obtained from the vaginal fornices and walls; each sample was examined on fresh smear treated with 10% KOH and cultivated in Sabouraud-antibiotic medium. In order to determine the species, the following assays were performed: germinal tube production and chlamydo-spore formation in wheat flour-Tween 80 broth, observation of colony color in CHROMagar *Candida*, morphology in corn-meal and assimilation of sugars. We used controls for *C. albicans*, *C. tropicalis* and *C. glabrata*. Among the *Candida* species, *C. albicans* was the most frequently found (88,6%: n=31); *C. tropicalis* represented 5,7% (n=2) and *C. glabrata* 5,7% (n=2). Our results are similar to those found by other groups in Venezuela reporting frequencies for *C. albicans* between 50 and 87,5% of their series and internationally, *C. albicans* is always the most common species isolated. This group of vaginal samples are part of a larger project being carried out by our group.

**Key words:** Vulvovaginitis, vaginitis, *Candida* spp. *Candida albicans*