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Abstracts



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Microbes in Health and Disease

Is hand disinfectant a public health problem? A case study in the Centre of Biological Engineering

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For about three years, the world was faced with the COVID-19 pandemic that showed us the threats of unknown microorganisms. At the beginning of the pandemic several behavioural rules for prevention and protection were imposed. Besides the use of masks, ethanol solutions for hand disinfection were one of the most common measures. Public recipients of alcohol were seen and accessible in every public and private institutions and commercial places. However, with the official end of the pandemic this year (and even before that), it was possible to observe the abandoning of these recipients. Some stay in place empty and others still with the ethanol-glycerol solution. In the Centre of Biological Engineering building, we came to notice that some of these recipients were colonized with fungi. The aim of this work was to collect the fungal colonies and try to assess which fungi are present and their taxonomical variation.

Fungal colonies were collected from 4 different recipients. The number of isolates from each recipient ranged from 2 to 10. Based on morphological characteristics it was possible to identify some of the isolates as *Aspergillus* sp., *Penicillium* sp. and *Cladosporium* sp. To complement this information molecular identification is being carried out to try to get identification at species level.

We acknowledge that culture collections have a leading role in the search and preservation of microorganisms as well as public warning of their potential risks. Consequently, we intend to expand the sampling spots and make recommendations to the university staff (and the population in general) to assure that this is not a potential public health problem.

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