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Medical and Surgical Treatment of Endemic Mycotic Spinal Osteomyelitis

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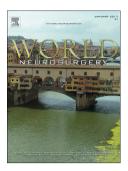
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#### ACCEPTED MANUSCRIPT

#### Medical and Surgical Treatment of Endemic Mycotic Spinal Osteomyelitis

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Endemic mycoses in the United States – coccidioidomycosis, blastomycosis, and histoplasmosis – represent important causes of respiratory and disseminated illness which may be difficult to treat, particularly with spinal involvement. These infections are caused by *Coccidioides, Blastomyces*, and *Histoplasma* spp. and are acquired via inhalation of fungal spores. These thermally dimorphic fungi infect immunocompetent and immunocompromised individuals, often causing self-limited pneumonia, but may also lead to life-threatening disseminated disease<sup>1,2</sup>. Most cases are sporadic and limited to regions of endemicity.

Coccidioidomycosis is endemic to the southwestern United States. Blastomycosis is endemic to regions bordering the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers, the Great Lakes, and the Saint Lawrence River. Histoplasmosis is less geographically restricted than the others, but is endemic to the Ohio and Mississippi River valleys and the surrounding regions<sup>1,2,3</sup>.

Dissemination of endemic mycoses is often associated with the immunocompromised state, however, may occur in immunocompetent patients as well. Severity of illness and mortality rate for these disseminated infections are significantly greater in patients who are immunocompromised<sup>4,5,6</sup>. Septic osteomyelitis and discitis caused by dissemination of endemic mycoses are rare disorders, with limited literature available to guide diagnosis and medical and surgical treatment paradigms<sup>6</sup>. Dissemination of histoplasmosis, blastomycosis and coccidioidomycosis to the spine can lead to vertebral body destruction, with spread to the epidural space leading to neurologic compression. Destruction of the vertebrae leads to loss of

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