DENVER — Experts in mycobacterial diseases at National Jewish Health, in collaboration with local health departments and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), are investigating a potential outbreak of a highly drug-resistant mycobacterium (germ) after U.S. patients who traveled to Mexico for stem cell injections became sick. Genetically identical *Mycobacterium abscessus* subspecies *massiliense* infections following stem cell injections at various clinics in Mexico prompted this investigation. Early results of the study were published today in the *CDC's Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR)*, and additional cases are being evaluated.

“As a world-renowned referral center for patients with mycobacterial diseases, we see patients from all over the country, and we noticed a trend of patients getting this particular infection after stem cell injections were performed outside the U.S. We performed whole genome sequencing of isolates from these patients, and we found they were genetically identical. We then notified the state health department and the CDC,” said pulmonologist Charles Daley, MD, senior author of the study and chief of the Division of Mycobacterial and Respiratory Infections at National Jewish Health.

“*Mycobacterium abscessus* is a highly drug-resistant, difficult-to-treat nontuberculous mycobacterium,” explained Minh-Vu H. Nguyen, MD, infectious diseases physician at National Jewish Health and lead author on the study. “We want the public to be wary that mycobacterial infections can come from unapproved stem cell injections. Also, clinicians seeing patients with infections in skin, other soft tissues or bone and joints should be aware of mycobacteria, specifically *Mycobacterium abscessus*, as a possible cause and notify their local health authorities if confirmed.”

“We want to make sure clinicians are diligently looking out for this strain from the outbreak of *Mycobacterium abscessus* subspecies *massiliense* infections,” said Dr. Daley.

The CDC issued a warning for U.S. residents who have procedures abroad as they may be at risk for infection, blood clots in the legs and lungs, and even death. Experts urge patients to talk with their doctor about these risks before traveling outside of the country for health care.

*National Jewish Health* is the leading respiratory hospital in the nation. Founded 125 years ago as a nonprofit hospital, National Jewish Health today is the only facility in the world dedicated exclusively to groundbreaking medical research and treatment of children and adults with respiratory, cardiac, immune and related disorders. Patients and families come to National Jewish Health from around the world to receive cutting-edge, comprehensive, coordinated care. To learn more, visit the media resources page.

Media Resources
We have many faculty members, from bench scientists to clinicians, who can speak on almost any aspect of respiratory, immune, cardiac and gastrointestinal disease as well as lung cancer and basic immunology.

- Accomplishments & Awards
- Annual Report
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Our team is available to arrange interviews, discuss events and story ideas.

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