Dear Sir

Spaghetti and meatballs. Spaghetti is a long, thin, cylindrical pasta of Italian origin. Spaghetti is made of semolina or flour and water. Italian dried spaghetti is made from durum wheat semolina, but outside of Italy it may be made with other kinds of flour. Traditionally, most spaghetti strings are 50 cm (20 in) long, but shorter lengths gained in popularity during the later half of the 20th century and now spaghetti is most commonly available in 25-30 cm (10-12 in) lengths. A variety of pasta dishes are based on it, from spaghetti alla Carbonara or garlic and oil to a spaghetti with tomato sauce, meat and other sauces. Spaghetti is the plural form of the Italian word spaghetto, which is a diminutive of spago, meaning "thin string" or "twine". A meatball (Port. almôndega) is made from an amount of ground meat rolled into a small ball, sometimes along with other ingredients, such as breadcrumbs, minced onion, spices, and possibly eggs. Meatballs are usually prepared and rolled by hand, and are cooked by frying, baking, steaming, or braising in sauce. There are many kinds of meatball recipes using different types of meats and spices, including vegetarian and fish alternatives, and various methods of preparation.

Pityriasis (Tinea) versicolor was first recognized as a fungal infection on the skin in 1846 by Eichstedt. For several years the disease was considered to be dermatophyte in origin, but Baillon, impressed by the yeastlike nature of the organism, coined the name Malassezia furfur in 1889 to distinguish this organism from Microsporum species of dermatophytes (Malassez, Louis Charles, French physiologist, 1842-1909). In 1951 Gordon isolated, characterized, and authenticated the organism Malassezia furfur and renamed it Pityrosporum orbiculare. It is now recognized and accepted that M. furfur is the correct name and P. orbiculare, P. ovale, and M. ovalis are synonymous.

Pityriasis versicolor is a common skin complaint in which flaky discolored patches appear mainly on the chest and back. The term 'pityriasis' is used to describe skin conditions in which the scale appears characterized, and authenticated the organism Malassezia furfur and renamed it Pityrosporum orbiculare. It is now recognized and accepted that M. furfur is the correct name and P. orbiculare, P. ovale, and M. ovalis are synonymous. versicolor does not appear to predispose affected areas to sunburn even when it causes pale white marks. The pale type of pityriasis versicolor is thought to be due to a chemical produced by Malassezia (Pityrosporum) that diffuses down and impairs the function of the pigment cells in the underlying skin. Often the lesions are asymptomatic and patients become aware of the lesions because affected areas do not tan.

Diagnosis of pityriasis versicolor is made clinically and confirmed by direct microscopic examination of scale prepared with 10% potassium hydroxide solution. The presence of both grapelike clusters of yeasts and short, septate branching pseudohyphal fragments are seen. Skin biopsy and culture are not generally required to confirm diagnosis.

In skin biopsy the horny layer in lesions of pityriasis versicolor contains abundant amount of fungal elements, which can be visualized in sections stained with hematoxylin-eosin as faintly basophilic structures. Malassezia (Pityrosporum) is present as a combination of both short pseudohyphae and spores, the light microscopic appearance of which is referred to as "spaghetti and meatballs" pattern (Port. espaguetes e almôndegas. Esp. albóndigas y espagueti) or frankfurters and beans (Port. salsichas alemãs e feijões) (1, 2). The spaghetti represents broken pseudohyphae and the meatballs are the spores of Malassezia furfur (Fig. 1).

The inflammatory response in pityriasis versicolor is usually minimal, although there may be slight hyperkeratosis, slight spongiosis, or a minimal superficial perivascular lymphocytic infiltration. In Brazil we like spaghetti very much, with or without meatballs.

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REFERENCES