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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Valley Fever Lecture Series to Bring Attention to ‘Silent Epidemic’

Discussions include the impact of the illness on farmworkers, children and the economy, its biological basis and misconceptions, and challenges detecting and treating valley fever

MERCED, Calif. — Valley fever, described as a “silent epidemic” by the Centers for Disease Control, will be explored through a series of wide-ranging talks at the University of California, Merced.

Twelve lectures will be held between March and May. Ten will be presented on the university campus. One will be presented remotely by the founder of valleyfeversurvivor.com and one presentation will be held at the UCSF Fresno Center for Medical Education and Research. All lectures are scheduled from 1 to 3 pm.

“The aim of the lecture series is to raise awareness of a largely silent disease that has a significant impact on the San Joaquin Valley,” said Professor Paul Brown, director of the campus’s Health Sciences Research Institute. “Great strides are needed to enhance prevention, detection and treatment. UC Merced is committed to developing a collaborative approach to respond to this regional ailment.”

Researchers estimate that each year, more than 150,000 people are infected by *Coccidioides*, the fungus that causes valley fever, according to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). Infection occurs when microscopic fungal spores are inhaled. Most people who are infected do not show symptoms, while others may experience flu-like symptoms that last from weeks to months. Severe cases can even result in death. The fungus is commonly found in the Southwest, particularly Arizona and California, including the San Joaquin Valley.

Friday, March 14

“Clinical Considerations in Coccidioidomycosis”

Nathan Stockamp, M.D., assistant clinical professor, UC San Francisco at UCSF Fresno
UC Merced, Social Sciences and Management Building, Room 317

Wednesday, April 2

“The Impact of Valley Fever on Correctional Health Care Ethics”

Clarence Cryer Jr., Master of Public Health, California Correctional Health Care
Services

UC Merced, Classroom and Office Building, Room 322

Friday, April 11

“Ecology of *Coccidioides immitis* - Challenges to Detect this Fungal Pathogen in its
Natural Habitat”

Antje Lauer, Ph.D., assistant professor, California State University, Bakersfield

UC Merced, Social Sciences and Management Building, Room 317

Wednesday, April 16

“Valley Fever Basics,” plus an update from the 2014 Cocci Study Group meeting

Herbert Boro, M.D., Fellow of the American College of Physicians, Cocci Study Group

UC Merced, Classroom and Office Building, Room 322

Friday, April 18

“Inflammasome Activation by the Fungal Pathogen, *Aspergillus fumigatus*”

David Ojcius, professor, UC Merced

UC Merced, Social Sciences and Management Building, Room 317

Wednesday, April 23

“Public and Medical Misinformation on Valley Fever”

David Filip, founder, Valley FeverSurvivor.com

UC Merced, Social Sciences and Management Building, Room 366

Wednesday, April 30

“The Ebb and Flow of *Coccidioidomycosis* in Kern County”

Kirt Emery, Master of Public Health, County of Kern, Public Health Services
Department

UC Merced, Classroom and Office Building, Room 322

Thursday, May 1

“Regulation of Cell Shape and Virulence in Thermally Dimorphic Fungi”

Anita Sil, M.D., associate professor, UC San Francisco

UC Merced, Social Sciences and Management Building, Room 317

Thursday, May 1

“Coccidioides Species Outside a Living Host: Saprophytic or Saprozoic?”

John Taylor, professor, UC Berkeley

UC Merced, Social Sciences and Management Building, Room 317

Wednesday, May 7

“Undocumented Accounts of Valley Fever: Farmworkers in the Central Valley”

Sarah M. Rios, UC Santa Barbara

UC Merced, Classroom and Office Building, Room 322

Wednesday, May 14

“Preliminary Perspectives of Children with Valley Fever”

Erin Gaab, Ph.D., UC Merced

UC Merced, Social Sciences and Management Building, Room 117

Wednesday, May 21

“The Costs Behind California’s Rising Silent Epidemic”

Leslie Wilson, professor, UC San Francisco

UCSF Fresno Center, Room 116

Lectures are free and open to the public. People unable to attend in person can watch as the discussions are streamed online, and will be available online afterward, too.

Attendees can register online or contact [Erin Gaab](#) at 209-228-4803 for streaming details and for more information.

The lecture series, funded in part by Sierra Health Foundation, is the next step in an effort led by the UC Merced Health Sciences Research Institute aimed at combating valley fever. In November 2013, UC Merced, UCSF Fresno Medical Education Program and California State University, Fresno’s Central California Center for Health and Human Services held a “Valley Fever Research Day” to determine research priorities and public service needs related to valley fever.

Because valley fever is a rare disease outside the Southwest, it does not attract sufficient research funding. More than 40 percent of people infected with valley fever have symptoms. Many of those infected with valley fever are sick without knowing why or without being diagnosed.

HSRI is developing a consortium to increase awareness about the disease and to improve detection and treatment through research, clinical care and community outreach. Partners include UCSF Fresno, Fresno State, Community Medical Centers, Children's Hospital Central California, the public health departments in the eight counties that make up the San Joaquin Valley and community organizations serving or working with people most at risk for valley fever.

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UC Merced opened Sept. 5, 2005, as the 10th campus in the University of California system and the first American research university of the 21st century. Situated near Yosemite National Park, the campus significantly expands access to the UC system for students throughout the state, with a special mission to increase college-going rates among students in the San Joaquin Valley. It also serves as a major base of advanced research, a model of sustainable design and construction, and a stimulus to economic growth and diversification throughout the region.