

Microsporidia — A New Threat to Humans ?

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Microsporidia are known for their intracellular parasitism in evertebrates. However, many species occur in fish and several other vertebrates including man. Although most descriptions on human microsporidia infections are given from AIDS-patients, recent findings indicate that also immune-competent people may become affected by microsporidian species and may suffer from severe disease symptoms. Although many species descriptions are known since long, details of their morphology, transmission

and biology are rather poorly understood due to the small size of these parasites. Even their systematical position remained doubtful. Several authors consider Microsporidia as very basic protozoans, while others keep them for fungi (due to chitin within their cyst wall). The present paper updates the knowledge on the fine structure and developmental processes of several species parasitic in bees, fish, rodents and humans with special reference to drug effects.