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Health newsfeed for Monday, October 22, 2012

**HEADLINE: MENINGITIS RISK** 

ANCHOR LEAD: HOW CAN WE EXPLAIN THE RECENT MENINGITIS OUTBREAK? ELIZABETH TRACEY REPORTS

Fourteen people have died so far and hundreds have been sickened by injection of a steroid medication into their backs to alleviate back pain, with federal officials warning that those numbers will keep rising. David Thomas, head of infectious diseases at Johns Hopkins, says contamination of supposedly sterile solutions can happen by any one of a number of microorganisms.

THOMAS: Any germ can cause contamination of a solution that's meant to be sterile. Fungi are just one of the types of germs that can contaminate. This particular germ has been challenging because it has infected people's brains and their central nervous system, and that's an area of the body that doesn't tolerate infections very well, and sometimes our antibiotics aren't as quick to work in those areas of the body. Together those factors have made this a particularly troublesome outbreak. :32

Thomas says anyone who's received an injectable medication from the New England Compounding Center should be aware. At Johns Hopkins, I'm Elizabeth Tracey.