

# THE UGLY FACE OF BEAUTY: WHY DOCTORS ARE HIGHLIGHTING THE PLIGHT OF A MILLION DISFIGURED FEMALE WORKERS

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<http://www.life-worldwide.org/fungal-diseases/chromoblastomycosis/>

<http://Gaffi.org>

## THE UGLY FACE OF BEAUTY: WHY LEADING DOCTORS ARE HIGHLIGHTING THE PLIGHT OF A MILLION DISFIGURED FEMALE WORKERS

Beauty, they say, is skin deep. Try telling that to the Babassu 'breakers' – the women of South America, Africa and Asia who for a hundred years have worked to harvest the oil from this special type of coconut, and ended up with an incurable skin fungal infection that disfigures, socially excludes them from their villages and can lead to cancer and death.

The irony is that the extracted oil is used by the beauty industry in moisturisers, cleansers and hair products, and to treat a number of skin diseases and illness like eczema.

Now, GAFFI (Global Action For Fungal Infection) is today\* petitioning the World Health Organisation to class the disease, known as chromoblastomycosis, as a neglected tropical disease (NTD), and for those companies in the West who buy the oil to provide the women with protective shoes, gloves and overalls as they say this is, in the main, a preventable disease.

GAFFI's founding President is Dr David Denning, Professor of Infectious Disease in Global Health at the University of Manchester. He explains: "The hard skin of the Babassu coconut is contaminated by a brown fungus. When the skin is pierced by the tough coconut strands, a slowly progressive infection develops that becomes intensely itchy. Scratching leads to secondary bacterial infection of the fungus to other body sites.

"Most cases progress and are rarely curative. Disfigurement and social exclusion are common. Sites most commonly affected are the lower and upper limbs and buttocks. Ear, face, neck and breasts have also been reported. Lesions slowly enlarge becoming verrucose and wart-like. Old lesions can be tumorous or cauliflower-like in appearance.

"Yet this is an occupational disease and could be prevented with the right clothing and protection and good hygiene advice. We are urging WHO to recognise its impact on these women workers and their families, and those companies who buy the oil for their products to work with us to reduce this debilitating and horrendous disease."

GAFFI is a registered International Foundation based in Geneva, focussed on four major tasks related to serious fungal infections. These are:

- Universal access to fungal disease diagnostics for serious fungal disease
- Universal access to generic antifungal agents
- Better data on the number and severity of fungal infections
- Health professional education related to better recognition and care for patients with serious fungal disease.

See [www.GAFFI.org](http://www.GAFFI.org)

\*100 years of chromoblastomycosis- 3 day symposium in Sao Luis, Brazil Oct 8-10 2014

For more information please contact Susan Osborne, Director of Communications at The Goodwork Organisation on 07836 229208

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