ONYCHOMYCOSIS CAUSED BY *Scytalidium dimidiatum*. REPORT OF TWO CASES. REVIEW OF THE TAXONOMY OF THE SYNANAMORPH AND ANAMORPH FORMS OF THIS COELOMYCETE

Carlos da Silva Lacaz(1), Amélia Dias Pereira(2), Elisabeth Maria Heins-Vaccari(1), Luiz Carlos Cucê(3), Cristiane Benatti(3), Ricardo Spina Nunes(3), Natalina Takahashi de Meio(1), Roseli Santos de Freitas-Leite(1) & Giovana Leticia Hernandez-Arraigada(1)

SUMMARY

The authors report two cases of onychomycosis in the dystrophic form, one of them involving an HIV-positive patient, provoked by *Scytalidium dimidiatum*, previously called *Scytalidium lignicola*. The subject is reviewed from the taxonomic viewpoint, considering the anamorph *Hendersonula toruloidea* as a synonym of *Nattrassia mangiferae*, and having *Scytalidium dimidiatum* as the major synanamorph. According to many mycologists, *Scyalidium hyalinum* may be a separate species or a hyaline mutant of *Scytalidium dimidiatum*. *Scytalidium lignicola* Pesante 1957 was considered to be the type-species of the genus by Ellis (1971) and later to be a "conidial state" of *Hendersonula toruloidea* by the same author, today known as *Nattrassia mangiferae*. The microorganism lives only on the roots of certain plants (mainly *Platanus* and *Pinus*). It produces pycnidia and is not considered to be a pathogen, although it is considered as a possible emerging agent capable of provoking opportunistic fungal lesions. The importance of this topic as one of the most outstanding in fungal taxonomy, so likely to be modified over time, as well as its interest in the field of dermatologic mycology, are emphasized.

KEYWORDS: Onychomycosis; *Scytalidium dimidiatum*; *Nattrassia mangiferae*.

INTRODUCTION

Skin infections simulating superficial or deep dermatophytoses, as well as cases of dystrophic onychomycosis caused by "non-dermatophyte" fungi, are being reported with relative frequency, also in Brazil. Among the agents of these processes, the literature reports coelomycetes of the genus *Scytalidium* Pesante 1957, with the type-species *Scytalidium lignicola* (currently called *Scytalidium dimidiatum*) having been isolated from wood (mainly *Pinus* and *Platanus*) as well as from various roots and from soil in England, India, Italy and Rhodesia (Ellis, 1971). More recently, this species of demaceous or fuliginous fungi, are being reported with relative frequency, also as cases of dystrophic onychomycosis caused by "non-dermatophyte" fungi, are being reported with relative frequency, also in Brazil. Among the agents of these processes, the literature reports coelomycetes of the genus *Scytalidium* Pesante 1957, with the type-species *Scytalidium lignicola* (currently called *Scytalidium dimidiatum*) having been isolated from wood (mainly *Pinus* and *Platanus*) as well as from various roots and from soil in England, India, Italy and Rhodesia (Ellis, 1971). More recently, this species of demaceous or fuliginous fungus, *Scytalidium* Pesante 1957 has been considered to be the type-species of the genus by Ellis (1971) and later to be a "conidial state" of *Hendersonula toruloidea* by the same author, today known as *Nattrassia mangiferae*. The microorganism lives only on the roots of certain plants (mainly *Platanus* and *Pinus*). It produces pycnidia and is not considered to be a pathogen, although it is considered as a possible emerging agent capable of provoking opportunistic fungal lesions. The importance of this topic as one of the most outstanding in fungal taxonomy, so likely to be modified over time, as well as its interest in the field of dermatologic mycology, are emphasized.

KEYWORDS: Onychomycosis; *Scytalidium dimidiatum*; *Nattrassia mangiferae*.

(1) Laboratório de Micologia Médica do Instituto de Medicina Tropical de São Paulo and LIM/53 HC FMUSP.
(2) Instituto Adolfo Lutz, São Paulo, SP, Brasil.
(3) Clínica Dermatológica da Faculdade de Medicina da USP (Serviço do Prof. Evandro Rivitti), São Paulo, SP, Brasil.

Correspondence to: Prof. Carlos da Silva Lacaz, Instituto de Medicina Tropical de São Paulo, Lab. Micologia Médica, Av. Dr. Enéas de Carvalho Aguiar 500 térreo, 05403-000 S. Paulo, SP, Brasil.
(1989), reported that in one of the “isolates” sent by COSTA there was formation of typical pycnidia, showing that the strain under study corresponds to *Nattrassia mangiferae*. The production of pycnidia occurs in special media based on cereals after 6 to 8 weeks of culture.

Thus, following the new orientation of a large number of taxonomists, we may consider the group of fungi indicated below:


**Synonymy**: *Dothoriella mangiferae* H. Sydow et Sydow, 1916; *Hendersonula toruloidea* Nattrass, 1933; *Hendersonula cyprea* Nattrass, 1937; *Hendersonula aguthidis* Young, 1948; *Fusicoccum eucalypti* da Camara, 1929.

*Hendersonula* was described by Spegazzini in 1880, with the species *H. australis*. In the genus *Nattrassia* the conidiogenic cells are phialids and in *Hendersonula* they are annelids. The conidia are holoblastic and smooth, eventually with 1 to 2 septa. Collars are absent in the conidiogenous cells. Toruloid vegetative cells (synanamorph) with arthroconidia are present.

**Synanamorph**: *Scytalidium dimidiatum* (Penz) Sutton et Dyko, 1989.

**Synonymy**: *Torula dimidiata* Penz, 1982; *Exosporium favcetti* Wilson, 1947; *Scytalidium lignicola* Pesante, 1957. The fungus is detected on several plants, with superficial or immersed, branched, hyaline to grayish mycelium. Conidiophores are absent. Lageniform conidiogenous thick-walled cells and holoblastic, hyaline to grayish conidia, at times with a discrete collar, are observed.

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**Fig. 1** - a) Fingers showing hyperkeratosis and nail dystrophy. Patient M.A. da S.P. (HIV-positive); b) Toes presenting hyperkeratosis and nail dystrophy (Patient M.L.G. de O.).

**Fig. 2** - Direct examination of a nail scraping with 20% KOH demonstrating arthroconidia and septate hyphae of ocher coloring (400x); a) patient M.A. da SP; b) patient M.L.G.de O.
Fig. 3 - *Scytalidium dimidiatum* (isolated from patient M.L.G. de O.). Culture on potato agar on a slide showing chains of oblong arthroconidia of ocher coloring, some with clearly visible fine and black septa (400x).

Fig. 4 - *Scytalidium dimidiatum*, previously considered to be *Scytalidium lignicola*, isolated from a case of interdigital cutaneous pheo-hyphomycosis. a) Unstained culture on potato agar dextrose of this hyphomycete. Note the wide ocher septate hypha and barrel-shaped dark brown doliform arthroconidia with a thick cell wall (arrows) among others that are smaller, oblong, light ocher in color and arranged in a chain (400x); b) oblong ocher arthroconidia truncated at each end, many of them devoid of septation and others (arrows) with a clearly visible dark septum (400x). Case reported by COSTA et al. (1988).
Arthroconidia with a truncated base are present, oblong to doliform, grayish, with 1 septum. Globose, immersed, grayish to black pycnidia with a central ostiole are present.

**CASE REPORTS**

**Case 1** - M.A. da S.P., HC registration number (São Paulo) 3158725C, a 38 year old HIV-positive male, presented lesions of the nails on the left foot soles. Dermatologic examination revealed lesions of dystrophic onychia on the nails of 1st, 2nd and 3rd toes of the right foot and on the 2nd and 3rd toes of the left foot (Fig.1). Direct examination with 20% KOH revealed hyaline hyphae and dematiae (Fig. 2).

Identification: *Scytalidium dimidiatum*. Treatment with itraconazole was instituted. He did not return for a scheduled visit.

**Case 2** - M.L.G. de O., HC registration number (São Paulo) 3155630B, a 32 year old woman, presented lesions on the toes of 8 years duration. Dermatologic examination revealed lesions of dystrophic onychia on the nails of 1st, 2nd and 3rd toes of the right foot and on the 2nd and 3rd toes of the left foot (Fig.1). Direct examination with 20% KOH revealed tortuloid hyphae of black coloring (Fig. 2).

Culture was positive for *Scytalidium dimidiatum* (Figs. 3 and 4). Local treatment with iodine alcohol and systemic with ketoconazole, 1 tablet a day, was instituted. The patient did not return for a scheduled visit.

**DISCUSSION**

In a chapter on non-dermatophytic fungi capable of causing nail and skin lesions simulating dermatophytes, published in the excellent book by KANE et al. (1997)19, SUMMERBELL (1997)22 described *Scytalidium dimidiatum* as having dark or hyaline chains of arthroconidia, usually provoking desquamating lesions on the palms of the hands and on the soles of the feet in tropical and subtropical regions. SUMMERBELL (1997)22 pointed out that in a survey carried out in Canada (SUMMERBELL et al., 1989)19, this fungus was responsible for 0.7% of the cases of onychomycosis and 0.2% of skin infections on the foot soles.

*Scytalidium hyalinum* is accepted as a valid species. According to SUMMERBELL (1997)22, *S. lignicola* is found in nature only on decomposing materials or in clinical material as a contaminant.

In addition to having been isolated from cutaneous lesions simulating dermatophytes and onychomycoses25,16,20,15,26, *Scytalidium dimidiatum* and its anamorph *Nattrassia mangiferae*29 and *Scytalidium hyalinum*27 have been isolated from cases of:

1. - Endophthalmitis (AL RAJHI et al., 1993)1.
2. - Disseminated infection in a granulocytopenic child (BENNE et al., 1993)2.
3. - Invasive or noninvasive subcutaneous lesions (DICKINSON et al., 198316; SIGLER et al., 199721; DHINDSA et al., 199815).
5. - Lesions of the “verrucose dermatitis” type (MARILL et al., 197523; MARIAT et al., 19782).6.

With respect to the treatment of *Scytalidium* infections, using the “corneofungimetry” process, ARREESE et al. (1998)20 observed that *Scytalidium dimidiatum* can grow on the corneal layer forming hyphae and that itraconazole can partially inhibit its growth when administered orally. SIGLER et al. (1997)20 observed *in vitro* susceptibility of *Scytalidium dimidiatum* to amphotericin B, itraconazole, 5-fluorocytocin, ketoconazole and mycophenolate. HOOG & GUARRO (1995)17, when dealing with the genus *Scytalidium*, consider also *Scytalidium infectans* and *Scytalidium japonicum*, side by side with the *hyalinum* species. According to some mycologists, *Scytalidium hyalinum* is a mutant of *Scytalidium dimidiatum*, which usually causes hyperkeratotic lesions of hands and feet. According to PERRIN & BARAN (1994)32, *Scytalidium* species provoke nail lesions, usually causing superficial and at times brown-pigmented onychomycoses.

Total dystrophic lesions identical to those provoked by dermatophytes sometimes occur, as in the cases reported here (BARAN & DAWBERS, 1994; BARAN et al., 1998).

**RESUMO**

Onicomicose por *Scytalidium dimidiatum*. Registro de dois casos. Revisão da taxonomia das formas sinanamorfas e anaforma deste celomiceto.


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35. (1) Laboratório de Micologia Médica do Instituto de Medicina Tropical de São Paulo e LIM/53 ISCFM/USP.

(2) Instituto Adolfo Lutz, São Paulo, SP, Brasil

(3) Clínica Dermatológica da Faculdade de Medicina da USP (Serviço do Prof. Evandro Rivitti), São Paulo, SP, Brasil.

Correspondence to: Prof. Carlos da Silva Lacaz, Instituto de Medicina Tropical de São Paulo, Lab. Micologia Médica, Av. Dr. Enéas de Carvalho Aguiar 500 térreo, 05403-000 S. Paulo, SP, Brasil.

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