**Arsenicicoccus bolidensis** gen. nov., sp. nov., a novel actinomycete isolated from contaminated lake sediment

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An unknown Gram-positive, catalase-positive, facultatively anaerobic, non-spore-forming, coccus-shaped bacterium originating from sediment was characterized using phenotypic, molecular chemical and molecular phylogenetic methods. Chemical studies revealed the presence of a cell-wall murein based on LL-diaminopimelic acid (type LL-Dpm-glycine1), a complex mixture of saturated, monounsaturated and iso- and anteiso-methyl-branched, non-hydroxylated, long-chain cellular fatty acids and tetrahydrogenated menaquinones with eight isoprene units [MK-8(H4)] as the major respiratory lipoquinone. This combination of characteristics somewhat resembled members of the suborder **Micrococcineae**, but did not correspond to any currently described species. Comparative 16S rRNA gene sequencing confirmed that the unidentified coccus-shaped organism is a member of the **Actinobacteria** and represents a hitherto-unknown subline related to, albeit different from, a number of taxa including **Intrasporangium**, **Janibacter**, **Terrabacter**, **Terracoccus** and **Ornithinicoccus**. Based on phenotypic and phylogenetic considerations, it is proposed that the unknown bacterium originating from lake sediment be classified as a new genus and species, **Arsenicicoccus bolidensis** gen. nov., sp. nov. (type strain CCUG 47306T = DSM 15745T).

During the course of mining for base metals in the Boliden region in the Vasterbotten district of northern Sweden, millions of tons of mine tailings have been generated. Much of the area is badly affected by acid mine drainage (pH 3–4) and has quite limited vegetation cover. These tailings contain about 0.5% arsenic (As), resulting in approximately 600,000 tons of arsenic exposed to weathering processes (Grip, 1973). Arsenic from mine tailings leaches out due to weathering and other biogeochemical processes, resulting in high As concentrations in ground water, surface sediments and soils (Jacks et al., 2003). A site in Adak received the sulfidic tailings (with > 4000 mg As kg−1) from an ore-processing unit that was functional from 1945 to 1975. These tailings were mixed with till to restrict oxidation of pyrites and leaching of heavy metals. The tailings extend over a large area and drain into a man-made lake. During the course of an investigation into the microbiological flora of the aforementioned lake sediment, we isolated a Gram-positive, coccus-shaped organism of uncertain taxonomic position. In this article, we report the results of a polyphasic taxonomic study on the unknown coccus. Based on the findings presented, we propose that the unknown organism be assigned to a new genus, **Arsenicicoccus**, as **Arsenicicoccus bolidensis** gen. nov., sp. nov.

Strain CCUG 47306T was isolated from sediment containing mine waste (Boliden, Sweden). In 2002, we collected several 30–45 cm long undisturbed sediment cores across the lake using a gravity corer. The cores were brought to the laboratory within 48 h and immediately sliced for various geochemical and microbiological assays. During slicing, the outer surface of the cores was pared with a sterile knife and samples stored in zip-lock plastic bags. Sediments were added to basal salts medium for enrichment, which contained the following constituents (l−1): 0.25 g NH4Cl,
plates spiked with 0.025 mg Ni(NO$_3$)$_2$.6H$_2$O and 0.025 mg Na$_2$MoO$_4$.2H$_2$O, 0.025 mg Ni(NO$_3$)$_2$.6H$_2$O and 0.05 mg p-aminobenzoic acid]. Lactate (0.089 mM) was used as the sole carbon source in the medium. The medium was later spiked with 0.435 mM As to facilitate the isolation of As-resistant strains. As-enriched cultures were diluted 10-fold and 0.1 ml of the extract was spread onto tryptic soy agar plates spiked with 0.435 mM As. After 72 h of incubation at 22°C, colonies were selected and replated on the same medium until pure cultures were obtained.

The unidentified isolate was characterized biochemically using the API Rapid ID 32Staph, API Coryne and API ZYM systems according to the manufacturer’s instructions. Cell-wall murein was prepared by mechanical disruption of cells and acid hydrolysates analysed as described by Schleifer & Kandler (1972), except that ascending TLC with cellulose sheets was used. Molar ratios of amino acids were determined by GC and GC-MS of C$_{16}$-heptafluorobutyryl amino acid isobutyol esters (MacKenzie, 1987). Long-chain cellular fatty acids were analysed as described by Kämpfer & Kroppenstedt (1996). Isoprenoid quinones were extracted as described by Collins et al. (1977) and analysed by HPLC as described by Groth et al. (1997). The G+C content of DNA was determined by HPLC according to Mesbah et al. (1989). The 16S rRNA gene of the isolate was amplified using the primers 27f and 1492r (Felsenstein, 1989). The resulting multiple sequence alignment was retrieved from GenBank and aligned with the newly determined coccus with highest sequence similarity (95% similarity to the unknown isolate (data not shown). A tree constructed using the neighbour-joining method showing the phylogenetic relationships of the unidentified coccus (Fig. 1) confirms the association of the isolate with Intrasporangium, Ornithinicoccus, Janibacter, Terrabacter, Terracoccus and related organisms.

From the polyphasic taxonomic study, it is evident that the unidentified coccus from contaminated lake sediment represents a hitherto-unknown species within the Actinobacteria. Comparative 16S rRNA gene sequence studies showed that the unidentified organism was a neighbour taxon of the family Intrasporangiaceae and the genus Ornithinicoccus. However, the unknown coccus formed a distinct clade and did not display a statistically significant affinity with any described genus. Furthermore, sequence divergence values of approximately 5% between the unidentified organism and its nearest relatives (Terrabacter tumescens, Intrasporangium calvum, Ornithinicoccus hortensis, Janibacter species and Terracoccus luteus) reinforced its distinctiveness. Although the relatively unusual respiratory quinone composition of the unknown organism [MK-8(H$_4$)] reinforced its affinity with most members of the
family Intrasporangiaceae (except for Intrasporangium calvum, which contains MK-8; Collins et al., 1984) and the genus Ornithinicoccus, other chemotaxonomic features demonstrated its uniqueness. In particular, the presence of L-L-Dpm in the wall of the unidentified coccus readily distinguishes it from the genera Ornithinicoccus and Janibacter, which respectively possess mureins based on L-ornithine (Groth et al., 1999) and meso-Dpm (Martin et al., 1997). Similarly, the presence of a single glycine residue within the murein interpeptide bridge of the unknown coccus serves to distinguish it from Intrasporangium calvum, Terrabacter tumescens and Terrabacter luteus, which possess a murein type LL-Dpm-glycine3 (Prauser et al., 1997). The long-chain cellular fatty acids of the unknown coccus were also quite distinct from those of its phylogenetic neighbours. The unknown bacterium was characterized by a complex mixture of straight-chain saturated, monounsaturated, iso- and anteiso-methyl-branched acids, with C16:1ω7c, iso-C15:0 and C18:1ω9c as the predominant acids. In contrast, members of Ornithinicoccus and Terracoccus are characterized by containing major amounts of anteiso-C15:0 and iso-C15:0 and much reduced levels of monounsaturated acids (Groth et al., 1999; Prauser et al., 1997), whereas Terrabacter tumescens and Intrasporangium calvum contain predominantly isomethyl-branched acids (Collins et al., 1983; Schumann et al., 1997). Janibacter species also produce complex fatty acids profiles, but they differ markedly from that of the unknown coccus. In particular, Janibacter species produce significantly higher levels of iso-C16:0 and do not synthesize major amounts of C16:1ω7c (Martin et al., 1997; Yoon et al., 2000). Therefore, based on the distinct subline formed by the novel bacterium, in concert with its quite distinct chemotaxonomic characteristics, we are of the opinion that the unknown bacterium from sediment merits assignment to a new genus and species within the Actinobacteria, for which the name Arsenicicoccus bolidensis gen. nov., sp. nov. is proposed.

An examination of the 16S rRNA sequence of Arsenicicoccus bolidensis CCUG 47306T revealed a close similarity to other taxa within the family Intrasporangiaceae. In particular, Arsenicicoccus bolidensis CCUG 47306T possessed 25 of 31 rDNA signature nucleotides used to define the family Intrasporangiaceae (Stackebrandt et al., 1997). Therefore, it is also proposed that the new genus Arsenicicoccus be classified in the family Intrasporangiaceae within the suborder Micrococcales.

**Description of Arsenicicoccus gen. nov.**

Arsenicicoccus (Ar.sen.i.ci.co cus. L. n. arsenicum arsenic; L. masc. n. coccius berry; N.L. masc. n. Arsenicicoccus arsenic coccus, because the type species was recovered from an arsenic enrichment).

Cells are Gram-positive, non-spore-forming cocci that occur in clusters. Facultatively anaerobic and catalase-positive. Acid is formed from glucose and some other carbohydrates. Nitrate is reduced. Voges–Proskauer negative. The major long-chain cellular fatty acids are a complex mixture of straight-chain saturated, monounsaturated, iso- and anteiso-methyl-branched acids. Hydroxy fatty acids are not present. The major respiratory quinone is MK-8(H4). Cell-wall murein is based on L-L-Dpm (type: L-L-Dpm-glycine3). The G+C content of genomic DNA of the
type species is 72.2 mol%. The type species is *Arsenicoccus bolidensis*.

**Description of Arsenicoccus bolidensis sp. nov.**

*Arsenicoccus bolidensis* (bol.id.en’sis. N.L. masc. adj. *bolidensis* pertaining to the Boliden region in Vasterbotten district of northern Sweden, where the type strain was isolated).

Displays the following properties in addition to those given in the genus description. Using commercially available API kits, acid is formed from glucose, glycogen, fructose, mannitol, mannose, sucrose and D-xylene. Depending on the test kit, acid may or may not be produced from cellobiose, lactose, ribose and maltose. Using the API ZYM system, alkaline phosphatase, esterase C-4, ester lipase C8, α-galactosidase, β-galactosidase, α-glucosidase and β-glucosidase are positive; acid phosphatase and phosphoamidase are either weakly positive or negative. Chymotrypsin, cystine arylamidase, γ- fucosidase, β-glucuronidase, α-mannosidase, lipase C14, leucine arylamidase, N-acetyl-β-glucosaminidase, trypsin and valine arylamidase are not detected. Using the API Coryne test kit, alkaline phosphatase, β-galactosidase, α-glucosidase, pyrazinamidase and pyrrolidonyl arylamidase are detected but β-glucuronidase and N-acetyl-β-glucosaminidase are not. Aesculin and aesculetin are hydrolysed but urea is not. Nitrate is reduced. Chemotaxonomic characteristics are given in the genus description. The G+C content of DNA is 72.2 mol%. Highly As-tolerant. Possesses As(V) reduction mechanisms that are coupled to respiration or to impart resistance to As toxicity.

The type strain is CCUG 47306T (= DSM 15745T).

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**References**


