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The 'species complex' issue in clinically relevant fungi: A case study in *Scedosporium apiospermum*

Min Chen, Dr. Jingsi Zeng, G. Sybren De Hoog, Benjamin Stielow, A.H.G. Gerrits Van Den Ende, Wanqing Liao, Mag. Dr. rer. nat. Michaela Lackner



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2 **The ‘species complex’ issue in clinically relevant fungi: a case study in**
3 ***Scedosporium apiospermum***

4 *Min CHEN^{a,b,c}, Jingsi ZENG^{d,*}, G. Sybren DE HOOG^{a,b,c,e}, Benjamin STIELOW^b, A. H. G. GERRITS*
5 *VAN DEN ENDE^b, Wanqing LIAO^a, Michaela LACKNER^{f,*}*

6 ^a*Shanghai Institute of Medical Mycology, Shanghai Key Laboratory of Molecular Medical Mycology,*
7 *Department of Dermatology, Shanghai Changzheng Hospital, Shanghai, China*

8 ^b*CBS-KNAW Fungal Biodiversity Centre, Utrecht, The Netherlands*

9 ^c*Institute of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Dynamics, University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam, The Netherlands*

10 ^d*Department of Dermatology and Venereology, Union Hospital, Tongji Medical College, Huazhong Science and*
11 *Technology University, Wuhan, China*

12 ^e*Third Affiliated Hospital, Sun Yat-sen University, Guangzhou, 510630, China; Department of Dermatology,*
13 *Peking University First Hospital, Research Center for Medical Mycology, Beijing, 100034, China; Biological*
14 *Sciences Department, Faculty of Science, King Abdulaziz University, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia; Department of*
15 *Basic Biology, University of Paraná, Curitiba, Brazil*

16 ^f*Division of Hygiene and Medical Microbiology, Medical University of Innsbruck, Innsbruck, Austria*

17 *Corresponding authors:

18 Mag. Dr. rer. nat. Michaela Lackner, Division of Hygiene and Medical Microbiology, Medical University of
19 Innsbruck, Schoepfstrase 41, 6020 Innsbruck, Austria. Phone: +43 512 9003 70725; Fax: +43 512 9003 73700;
20 E-mail: Michaela.Lackner@i-med.ac.at.

21 Dr. Jingsi Zeng, Department of Dermatology and Venereology, Union Hospital, Tongji Medical College,
22 Huazhong Science and Technology University, Jiefang Dadao 1277, 430022 Wuhan, China. Phone: +0086-27-
23 85726195; Fax: +0086 27 85776343; E-mail: wuhanzjs@aliyun.com.

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Abstract

32 The genus *Scedosporium* currently comprises six species, *S. apiospermum*, *S. boydii*, *Pseudallescheria*
33 *angusta*, *S. minutisporum*, *S. dehoogii*, and *S. aurantiacum*, most of which can be distinguished with
34 the primary fungal DNA barcode, the ITS1/2 region of the rDNA gene cluster. In the present study,
35 four additional genetic loci were explored from a phylogenetic point of view enabling a barcoding
36 approach based on K2P pairwise distances to resolve the taxa within the genus *Scedosporium*. We
37 included partial γ -actin (*ACT*), β -tubulin (*BT2*), elongation factor 1 α (*TEF1*) and the small ribosomal
38 protein 60S L10 (L1) (*RP60S*) genetic loci. Phylogenetic inference of each marker individually
39 showed that four out of six species in the genus *Scedosporium* can be distinguished unambiguously,
40 while strains of *S. apiospermum*, *S. boydii*, and *P. angusta* showed occasional recombination, and
41 accordingly, no genealogical concordance between markers was obtainable. We defined *S.*
42 *apiospermum*, *S. boydii* and *P. angusta* as the '*S. apiospermum* species complex' since observed
43 differences were not consistent between lineages, and no clinical differences are known between
44 entities within the complex. While *BT2* revealed the best performance among the genetic loci tested at
45 the lineage level, barcoding of the ITS region is sufficient for distinction of all entities in
46 *Scedosporium* at the species or 'complex' level.
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49 **Keywords:** *Scedosporium*; species complex; populations; primary barcode; ITS rDNA; secondary
50 barcode
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68 Introduction

69 The term ‘species complex’ is suggestive to cover groups of organisms or lineages that are
70 taxonomically closely related or even difficult to distinguish. However, no clear definition of the
71 category ‘species complex’ exists so far and some clarity in the use of the term is urgently needed. The
72 best-known use of ‘species complex’ for the kingdom Fungi is in the genus *Fusarium*, where ‘species
73 complexes’ were introduced (O’Donnell et al. 2012) as an alternative to the subgeneric ‘sections’ as
74 currently in use in genera like *Aspergillus* (Geiser et al. 2007) or *Trichoderma* (Bisset 1991;
75 Druzhinina & Kubicek 2005); in *Fusarium* the older, phenotypic sections did not match with
76 phylogeny. The current species complexes in *Fusarium* are monophyletic, together encompass all
77 species known in the respective genera, and hence such species complexes can be viewed as
78 taxonomic categories. However, in other cases a ‘species complex’ just describes a selected group of
79 entities that are difficult to distinguish from each other and/or classification of such groups is yet
80 unclear. For example, some genetically diverse strains with unclear taxonomic status were listed as
81 ‘*Aspergillus viridinutans* species complex’ (Hong et al. 2005). Bensch et al. (2012) grouped series of
82 closely related molecular siblings in *Cladosporium* as ‘species complexes’ under the name of their
83 original phenotype name such as ‘*C. herbarum* complex’ or ‘*C. cladosporioides* complex’; only few of
84 the siblings within these complexes revealed deviant ecological characteristics.

85 In addition to taxonomic criteria, species complexes have also been defined for divergent
86 practical reasons, one of which may be clinical or industrial significance. Howard et al. (2011)
87 suggested to list all well-described clinical species of the *Aspergillus* section *Nigri* as ‘*Aspergillus*
88 *niger* complex’ due to absence of differences in antifungal susceptibility profiles. Some authors even
89 united groups of unrelated fungi (Reedy et al. 2009) that were as yet unclassified (Manamgoda et al.
90 2012).

91 A further reason to aggregate species as a ‘species complex’ is unsettled taxonomy. For example,
92 *Cryptococcus neoformans*, a potentially fatal pathogenic yeast, was initially divided into two varieties,
93 var. *neoformans* and var. *gattii*. Katsu et al. (2004) united separate lineages within *C. neoformans* as
94 the ‘*C. neoformans* complex’ using the primary barcoding ITS locus of rDNA. Subsequently, Kwon-
95 Chung et al. (2006) brought the var. *gattii* to species level due to the significant divergence of
96 ecological, biochemical, and molecular characteristics. After a long debate, these molecular siblings
97 recently have been proposed as seven separate species in the ‘*C. neoformans* complex’ (Hagen et al.
98 2015). This is an example of a species aggregate with entities that are closely related but appear to
99 differ in some clinically relevant parameters. This was also the case in the ‘*Candida parapsilosis*
100 complex’, where the original species proved to have higher antifungal susceptibility than more recent
101 molecular siblings (Treviño-Rangel et al. 2012).

102 *Scedosporium* (being preferred over its sexual state name, *Pseudallescheria*; Lackner et al. 2014b)
103 is a genus of ubiquitous ascomycetous fungi causing a wide array of human infections. Among the

104 genus *Scedosporium*, *S. apiospermum* and *S. boydii* are clinically relevant, being the second most
105 common clinical molds in cystic fibrosis, after *Aspergillus fumigatus*. Currently, an increasing
106 incidence of infections caused by these species has been noticed, presently mainly in
107 immunocompromised hosts (Tammer et al. 2011). Two prevalent species are currently recognized, *S.*
108 *apiospermum* and *S. boydii*, for which as yet not unambiguous diagnostic parameters are available and
109 which are often taken together as a ‘complex’.

110 Thus, the term ‘species complex’ may (a) stand for a fixed taxonomic category below the genus
111 level, (b) indicate some closely related strains with uncertain taxonomic status, or it may (c) stand for
112 divergent species that for practical reasons are not precisely identifiable. The aim of the present study
113 is to provide clarity and consistency for the term ‘species complex’ in medical mycology. Cases (a)
114 and (c) are conceptually clear, just differing in their practical bias: taxonomically valid groups, which
115 are either identified or are not distinguished. Here we focused on the most problematic situation (b),
116 where data as yet obtained is insufficient to describe entities within the ‘species complex’ properly,
117 and use *Scedosporium* as an example.

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119

120 **Materials and methods**

121 ***Strains***

122 Members of the genus *Scedosporium* were studied by the analysis of five gene fragments and
123 compared with previously published AFLP profiles (Lackner et al. 2014a); the same set of strains was
124 used in all partitions. The 10 populations distinguished by AFLP were used as reference, in
125 accordance with Lackner et al. (2014a), including *P. minutispora*, *S. dehoogii*, and *S. aurantiacum*.
126 Thus, a total of 65 strains were analyzed, including 19 strains of *S. apiospermum*, 23 strains of *S.*
127 *boydii*, 9 strains of *S. dehoogii*, 7 strains of *P. angusta*, 3 strains of *S. minutisporum* and 3 strains of *S.*
128 *aurantiacum*. A single isolate of *Pseudallescheria desertorum* (CBS 489.72) was used as outgroup.
129 All of them were obtained from the reference collection of the Centraalbureau voor Schimmelcultures
130 Fungal Biodiversity Centre (CBS-KNAW), Utrecht, the Netherlands. All available type strains were
131 included. Stock cultures were maintained on slants of 2 % malt extract agar (MEA) at 24 °C. Meta data
132 on origin and sources of isolation are listed in Supplementary Table 1.

133

134 ***DNA extraction***

135 DNA was extracted following the CTAB protocol that was described previously (Lackner et al.
136 2014a). Quality of genomic DNA was verified by running 2 µL DNA sample in a 1.0 % agarose gel.
137 DNA sample was quantified with a NanoDrop 2000 spectrophotometer (Thermo Fisher, Wilmington,
138 DE, U.S.A.), and was stored at –20 °C until further use.

139

140 ***DNA amplification and sequencing***

141 Five gene regions were amplified for inclusion in the multi-locus sequence data analysis, i.e. partial
142 the γ -actin (*ACT*) gene, β -tubulin (*BT2*), elongation factor 1 α (*TEF1*), the small ribosomal protein 60S
143 L10 (L1) (RP60S L10) and the ITS region. DNA from each isolate was amplified by PCR in 12.5 μ L
144 reaction volumes using the primers and protocols described in Table 1 (Stielow et al. 2015). PCR
145 reactions (12.5 μ L final vol) were performed in a mixture containing 1.25 μ L 10 \times PCR buffer, 7.0 μ L
146 ddH₂O, 1.25 μ L dNTP mix (1.0 mM), 0.25 μ L of each primer (10 pmol), 0.5 μ L Taq polymerase (0.4
147 U/ μ L), 1.0 μ L DMSO (Sigma), 0.5 μ L MgCl₂ (50 mM), and 0.5 μ L template DNA (100 ng/ μ L). The
148 ABI Prism BigDye Terminator v. 3.1 (Thermo Fisher) was applied in a quarter its suggested reaction
149 volume. Reaction products were purified with Sephadex G-50 fine (GE Healthcare Bio-Sciences,
150 Uppsala, Sweden) and sequencing was performed on an ABI 3770XL capillary sequencer (Thermo
151 Fisher). Bidirectional reads were edited and adjusted by Lasergene Seqman (DNASTAR, Madison, WI,
152 U.S.A.). The length and guanine-cytosine content (G+C %) of each gene were analyzed by BIOEDIT v.
153 7.0.5.2 (Hall 1999) and MEGA6.1 (Tamura et al. 2011).

155 ***Phylogenetic analyses***

156 The sequences of ITS and the *ACT*, *BT2*, *TEF1* and *RP60S* genetic loci were aligned using the server
157 version of the MAFFT v. 7.0 (www.ebi.ac.uk/Tools/msa/mafft/), followed by manually adjustment of
158 5' and 3' primed ends in BIOEDIT v. 7.0.5.2. Gene sequences of *Pseudallescheria desertorum* CBS
159 489.72 were used to root the tree. The best-fit model of sequence evolution was determined by
160 MODELTEST v. 2.3 (Nylander 2004). All sequences determined in this study were deposited in
161 GenBank and the accession numbers were listed in Supplementary Table 1. After verifying the best
162 models, phylogenetic trees were inferred using maximum likelihood with 1000 rounds of re-sampling
163 in MEGA6.1, and bootstrap branch support was regarded conclusive when exceeding 80 %.
164 Topological congruency was performed using MRBAYES v. 3.1.2. on the CIPRES portal
165 (<http://www.phylo.org/>). Two parallel runs of four chains were run for 10,000,000 generations and
166 trees were sampled every 1,000 generations. TRACER version 1.5 was used to verify that the mean
167 likelihood value, effective sample size (ESS) and other parameters reached a plateau. For each run,
168 10 % of the trees were discarded as they were obtained during the burnin phase. Trees were viewed
169 and edited with FIGTREE v. 1.1.2 and MEGA 6.1 software.

171 ***Inter-species distances, intra-species heterogeneity and barcoding gaps***

172 Pairwise distances between species were calculated using estimation of evolutionary divergence over
173 sequence pairs between species. Each genetic locus dataset analysis was conducted in MEGA6.1 using
174 the best model of sequence evolution (Table 1). Regarding inter-species distance calculation, the
175 evolutionary distances were derived from numbers of base substitutions per site. The average

176 barcoding gaps between species also were calculated by MEGA6.1. As for the intra-species distances
177 (heterogeneity), each gene dataset was calculated by estimation of average evolutionary divergence
178 over sequence pairs within species and conducted in MEGA 6.1 using the best model. Average
179 distances resulted from number of base substitutions per site. Average intra-species heterogeneity of
180 each dataset was also calculated by MEGA 6.1. The barcoding gap is defined as ‘the lowest inter-
181 species distance’ minus ‘the highest intra-species heterogeneity’.

182

183 *Sliding window analysis*

184 Sliding windows for each genetic locus were inferred via the SPIDER (Species identity and evolution in
185 R; <http://spider.r-forge.r-project.org/>) package in R statistical software, employing the pairwise
186 distance (K2P as default) functions ‘slideAnalyses’ and ‘slideBoxplots’ as implemented in the package;
187 with ‘library’ dependencies ‘ape’, ‘pegas’, ‘adegenet’ and ‘ade4’. The sliding window ‘walk’ was pre
188 defined with 100 bp over all five markers to retrieve per window, per marker informativeness
189 representation (Brown 2011). Function ‘slide analyses’ infers a comprehensive set of graphical
190 overviews to visualize the ‘barcode’ quality of a given marker, e.g. topological tree consistency, mean
191 K2P distances, zero-cell K2P distances and species monophyly per window. We extracted the plot
192 ‘species monophyly’ and presentation of intra- vs. inter-species distances (= the barcoding gap; via
193 function ‘slide boxplots’) per 100 bp window for each marker to determine/visualize the overall
194 ‘barcode’ quality for each gene.

195

196

197 **Results**

198

199 *Profiles of each gene dataset*

200 Using primers and PCR conditions according to Stielow et al. (2015), a vast majority of the five
201 genetic loci of all investigated strains could be amplified and sequenced, ranging from 98.0 % in *TEF1*
202 and *BT2* to 100 % in ITS, *ACT* and *RP60S* (Table 2). Multiple copies were detected in *S. apiospermum*
203 using *TEF1* and in *P. angusta* using *BT2*. Among *S. apiospermum* and related species, the lengths of
204 the gene regions showed a significant variability, ranging from 328 bp (*ACT*) to 565 bp (*TEF1*).
205 G+C% of the gene regions varied significantly, ranging from approximately 50 % (*BT2*) to
206 approximately 58 % (*RP60S*). *ACT* showed the highest sequence variation (53/328, variable sites /
207 gene length), followed by *RP60S* (41/393), *BT2* (20/425), *TEF1* (12/553) and ITS (9/512). Profiles of
208 these genetic loci are shown in detail in Table 1.

209

210 *Inter-species distances*

211 The ITS region, and *BT2* and *RP60S* genes showed higher inter-specific values among the *S.*
212 *apiospermum* species complex and related species than *ACT* and *TEF1*. For the protein coding loci,
213 *BT2* had the highest inter-species distances (0.065 to 0.118), followed by *RP60S* (0.044 to 0.075), *ACT*
214 (0.021 to 0.060) and *TEF1* (0.017 to 0.044). Inter-species distances were significantly lower among *S.*
215 *apiospermum*, *S. boydii* and *P. angusta* within the *S. apiospermum* species complex when sister taxa
216 were compared to members of the species complex. The *BT2*, *RP60S* and *ACT* genetic loci had higher
217 inter-species distances in the *S. apiospermum* species complex than ITS and *TEF1*, which is
218 concordant with their numbers of variable sites. In the *S. apiospermum* species complex, the genetic
219 loci *BT2* (0.022–0.040), *RP60S* (0.025–0.037) and *ACT* (0.037–0.056) showed a higher inter-specific
220 value than *TEF1* (0.006–0.007) and ITS (0.003–0.010). Details are shown in Table 1.

221

222 ***Intra-species heterogeneity and barcoding gaps***

223 Intra-species heterogeneities and barcoding gaps were calculated in MEGA6.1 and are shown in Table
224 1. In the *S. apiospermum* species complex, ITS showed the highest average intra-species heterogeneity
225 (0.034), while *ACT* had the lowest average value of 0.005. The highest intra-species variability was
226 found in ITS (0.034) in *S. dehoogii*, and the lowest intra-species variability was also found in ITS
227 (0.000) in *S. minutispora*.

228 All datasets were calculated for barcoding gaps among the members of the *S. apiospermum*
229 species complex and related species in the present study. The highest barcoding gap was with ITS
230 (0.042), followed by *BT2* (0.038), *RP60S* (0.019), *ACT* (0.009) and *TEF1* (0.008).

231

232 ***Sliding window analysis***

233 Five datasets were statistical analyzed using the R-package SPIDER as shown in (Fig 3A, B). No
234 absolute separation between inter- and intraspecific distances could be retrieved for any of the five
235 gene markers based on K2P pairwise distances. However, high proportions of monophyletic species
236 even in the absence of perfect distance separation were retrieved for a number of genetic loci when
237 entities were merged prior analysis into the '*S. apiospermum* complex'. If not merged, all taxa became
238 indistinguishable based on a standard K2P distance matrix (data is available upon request). The *BT2*
239 dataset revealed the optimal 'barcode' characteristics among all investigated genetic loci, as some very
240 short sections (between ~1–40 and 135–185 bp) indicated perfect inter- and intra-species distance
241 separation, but not over the whole length of the gene. *BT2* also ranked first with respect to rendering
242 taxa as monophyletic, even in the presence of high average intraspecific heterogeneity (see evaluation
243 above). *ACT* indicated a similar potential as *BT2*, since intra- and interspecific distances were
244 separated in one section (~140–200 bp), but not as clearly as for *BT2*; proportions for inferring taxa as
245 monophyletic ranged between 0.60 and 0.75. *TEF1* indicated some local optima equal to *BT2* in ITS
246 region performance to separate within and between species distances (between ~50–55 and 150–230

247 bp), but also the opposite, particularly for the 3' primed end of the sequence. The *RP60S L10* (L1) 5'
248 primed end (~1–100 bp) had perfectly separated distances but this, interestingly, did not coincide with
249 a high proportion of taxonomic entities being inferred as monophyletic. In the ribosomal cluster, ITS
250 showed relatively poor performance with respect to resolving all entities as monophyletic, but ability
251 to clearly separate inter- and intra-specific distances was observed, particularly in ITS. Barcoding
252 performance of genetic loci, ranked from optimal to poor, was: *BT2* > *ACT* > *TEF1* > ITS = *RP60S*.
253 All five genetic locus datasets had the ability to infer the investigated taxa as monophyletic entities
254 with window proportions ranging from 0.00 to 0.80, for each analyzed compartment as mentioned
255 above. Ranking for the largest proportions of monophyletic taxa is equal to barcoding performance.

256

257 *Phylogenetic analyses*

258 Single-locus analyses were performed for ITS, *BT2*, *ACT*, *RP60S* and *TEF1* in order to investigate the
259 phylogenetic relationships among members of the *S. apiospermum* species complex and related
260 species. Similar to the selection of Lackner et al. (2014a), *P. desertorum* was defined as out-group
261 species. The *S. apiospermum* species complex could be unambiguously segregated from all related
262 species such as *S. dehoogii* based on Bayesian and maximum likelihood inference using separate *BT2*,
263 *ACT*, *RP60S* and the concatenated 5 genetic loci sequences (Fig 1; Supplementary Fig 3). Conversely,
264 isolates of the *S. apiospermum* species complex were more distantly split in phylogenetic trees based
265 on ITS and *TEF1* (Supplementary Fig 1). No major conflicts were detected among the single genetic
266 locus phylogenies, thus confirming lineage assignment of all *Scedosporium* species and the *S.*
267 *apiospermum* species complex.

268 Midpoint-rooted phylogenies were explored to analyze the diversity within the *S. apiospermum*
269 species complex. The supported clades in ITS comprise type or authentic strains of *S. apiospermum*, *S.*
270 *boydii* and *P. angusta*, respectively (Supplementary Fig 2). Strains listed as *P. ellipsoidea*, which were
271 listed as such because of affiliation to group AFLP1, formed clusters with bootstrap support below 80
272 % for most of the genetic loci and were therefore not differentiated from the *S. boydii* clusters. In the
273 *RP60S* top-ranked tree (Fig 2), *S. apiospermum* and *P. angusta* clades were subdivided into 4 and 2
274 clusters, respectively. In the *ACT* top-ranked tree, *S. boydii* had 4 clusters, and *S. apiospermum* and *P.*
275 *angusta* had 2 clusters and 1 cluster, respectively. In the *BT2* top-ranked tree, *S. boydii* and *S.*
276 *apiospermum* contained 4 and 2 clusters, respectively; *P. angusta* contained 2 clusters. Thus the *S.*
277 *boydii* clusters had the largest degree of heterogeneity, followed by *S. apiospermum* and *P. angusta*.

278 Additionally, taking the three main clades *S. apiospermum*, *S. boydii* and *P. angusta* as reference,
279 group members were mostly identical, except for five strains (CBS 115829, CBS 987.73, CBS
280 101719, CBS 117432 and CBS 117436) which were interchanged between *S. apiospermum* and *S.*
281 *boydii* (Table 3) and thus could be regarded as *in silico* recombinants.

282

283

284 **Discussion**

285 The indication ‘species complex’ is frequently used in medical mycology, with rather diverse
286 connotations. In the present paper, ‘species complexes’ are defined as aggregated taxonomic entities
287 (cryptic siblings), i.e. species that cannot confidently be distinguished by standard diagnostic tools,
288 forming a clear monophyletic group. In our example dataset the standard barcoding genetic locus ITS
289 functions well for most species, except for *S. apiospermum*, *S. boydii* and *P. angusta*. Thus, secondary
290 barcodes other than those investigated would be necessary for routine diagnostic application. Species
291 complexes under a stringent barcoding concept may be attributed to the following: (1) Groups of
292 individuals which appear as a single monophyletic clade when the primary barcoding gene is applied,
293 and where application of a secondary barcode is judged irrelevant for practical reasons depending on
294 the area of interest; (2) Groups of individuals with unconfirmed species delimitation, even when
295 secondary barcodes are applied. As outlined by Al-Hatmi et al. (2015), species complexes of type (1)
296 are found in *Fusarium*, where classical phenotypic species have been split up into smaller molecular
297 entities. There is no need to illustrate ‘complexes’ e.g. in *Sporothrix*, where species can be
298 distinguished phenotypically and clearly differ in clinical behavior, i.e. virulence, antifungal
299 susceptibility and distribution (Zhang et al. 2015). For these reasons it is less appropriate to
300 amalgamate *Sporothrix* species in a ‘complex’, as it is frequently done (e.g. Tellez et al. 2014).

301 Complexes of type (1) and (2) thus refer to clusters of species where distinction is either (1)
302 judged irrelevant, or (2) are as yet impossible. Hong et al. (2005) listed an ‘*Aspergillus viridinutans*
303 complex’ for a variable cluster of unnamed strains. *S. apiospermum* is another example of the second
304 type (2) of species complexes, i.e. a monophyletic group showing diversity with undefined species
305 delimitation. The diversity of *S. apiospermum* and all its relatives known to date, are affiliated to the
306 same clade defining the genus *Scedosporium*, here investigated with five genetic markers, namely ITS,
307 *ACT*, *BT2*, *TEF1*, and *RP60S*, and data were compared with previously published AFLP patterns of
308 the same strains (Lackner et al. 2014a). In our study, we found a barcoding gap in ITS region between
309 the ‘*S. apiospermum* complex’ and remaining species. A recent barcoding paper (Irinyi et al. 2015)
310 reported the absence of barcoding gap in ITS within *Scedosporium* species that we here treat as
311 ‘complex’. The barcoding gap of Irinyi and colleagues was calculated using *S. apiospermum*, *S.*
312 *boydii*, *S. aurantiacum*, *S. dehoogii*, and more remote species. In contrast, we compared *S.*
313 *apiospermum*, *S. boydii*, and *P. angusta* on the one hand with remaining species on the other.
314 Although the highest barcoding gap was found in ITS (0.042), a continuous region (approximately
315 ranging from 130 to 160 bp) in *BT2* (barcoding gap = 0.038) showed a high proportion (> 0.8) of
316 species that are monophyletic (Fig 3) and this area also showed a distinct barcoding gap between the
317 closest species. Thus, we think *BT2* is the best barcoding gene among the genetic loci tested in the
318 present study, the region 130–160 being sufficient for unambiguous distinction as a barcode identifier
319 (Heinrichs et al. 2012). All entities in *Scedosporium* (at the ‘complex’ level) can be distinguished by

320 other the remaining four genetic markers, and including primary barcoding ITS. In addition, a high
321 phylogenetic resolution between entities was achieved using *BT2*, *P60S* and *ACT*, thus partially
322 coinciding with results from a puristic K2P distance matrix. *Scedosporium dehoogii*, *S. minutisporum*
323 and *S. aurantiacum* are phenotypically distinguishable and differ in clinical relevance (Kaltseis et
324 al.2009) and antifungal susceptibility (Lackner et al. 2014a) and therefore it is not useful to include
325 these in a complex; these are simply closely related species. The complex under consideration
326 comprises *Scedosporium (Pseudallescheria) boydii* and *S. apiospermum* with the inclusion of *P.*
327 *ellipsoidea* and *P. fusoidea* as synonyms, and with *P. angusta* as a doubtful intermediate taxon
328 (Gilgado et al. 2005). A debate concerning the distinction of these species has been ongoing ever since
329 (Lackner et al. 2014b).

330 The barcode ITS, as well as *TEF1* just allow approximate distinction of *S. apiospermum* and
331 *S. boydii*, with in our dataset 5 strains deviating, i.e. with a predictive power of about 78 %. Higher
332 degrees of resolution with 7–12 well-supported clades are found with secondary barcodes *ACT*, *RP60S*
333 and *BT2*. The type strain of *P. ellipsoidea* was member of a cluster which was not inferred different
334 from *S. boydii* and thus should not be recognized as such; *P. fusoidea* was earlier proven to be a
335 synonym of *S. boydii* (Lackner et al. 2014a). In contrast, *P. angusta* comprised a cluster with high
336 bootstrap branch support that was recognized in all loci, eventually being composed of two supported
337 sub-clusters (Fig. 2) and taking an intermediate position between *S. apiospermum* and *S. boydii*
338 (Lackner et al. 2014a).

339 Although differences in re-sampling support were found between clusters united as *S.*
340 *apiospermum* and *S. boydii*, five putative *in silico* recombinants were detected. Whether these
341 recombinants form fertile offspring or are hybrids remains to be verified with *in vitro* crossing
342 experiments. Gilgado et al. (2005) noted a difference between homothallism (observed in *S. boydii*)
343 and heterothallism (observed in *S. apiospermum*), but given the limited number of strains tested it is
344 likely that these sexual traits were not following clear species limits; the molecular mechanism behind
345 this has as yet not been revealed. No recombination event was observed with any of the clusters in *P.*
346 *angusta*, but this may be due to the limited number of strains available. We conclude that the three
347 species clusters (*S. apiospermum*, *P. angusta*, and *S. boydii*) are genetically different, but given the
348 occurrence of recombination in on average 13.5 % of the strains of *S. apiospermum* and *S. boydii*
349 analyzed, these taxa are probably better recognized at the level of populations rather than at the
350 species level. Increased efforts in genome sequencing will likely shed more light on these lineages.

351 All three entities could be further subdivided into sub-populations, with the help of secondary
352 barcoding markers used here. Higher diversity was observed in *S. boydii* than in *S. apiospermum* and
353 *P. angusta*; this was particularly the case for *BT2*. When antifungal susceptibility patterns were plotted
354 on any of the clusters, no significant difference was found in frequency of azole-, echinocandin- or
355 polyene-resistance (Lackner et al. 2014a). Also no difference was found in severity or location of
356 infection linked to any of the clusters. Discrimination of *S. apiospermum*, *P. angusta*, and *S. boydii*

357 does not imply a changed therapeutically management or information on the severity of infection or
358 the potential to disseminate, the delimitation of current species within the *S. apiospermum* species
359 complex does not play a significant role in medical mycology and routine laboratory diagnostics.

360 In conclusion, the term 'species complex' should be primarily used to indicate some closely
361 related strains with uncertain taxonomic or species status in medical mycology. We may state that for
362 reasons of absence of genetic separation, as well as absence of clinical relevance of individual lineages,
363 the species *S. apiospermum*, *P. angusta*, and *S. boydii* should be referred to as the '*Scedosporium*
364 *apiospermum* species complex'. Their distinction in clinical practice is redundant, and use of ITS
365 region is sufficient. Highest resolution is achieved with *BT2*, where a small region of 30 bp is
366 sufficient for distinction of all relevant entities and is particularly suited for probe development.

367

368

369 **Acknowledgments**

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539 **Legends**

540 Table 1 Phylogenetic distance analysis of the *Scedosporium apiospermum* species complex, *S.*
541 *dehoogii*, *S. minutisporum*, *S. aurantiacum* and *Pseudallescheria desertorum* based on ITS, *BT2*, *ACT*,
542 *RP60S* and *TEF1*.

543

544 Table 2 Success rates of sequencing for each genetic locus.

545

546 Table 3 Number of clades and recombinants (species association) per gene marker compared with
547 AFLP clusters.

548 SA, *Scedosporium apiospermum*; SB, *S. boydii*; nd, no data; *AFLP results from Lackner et al.

549 (2014a).

550

551 Table S1 Isolates of the *S. apiospermum* species complex and related species included in the study.

552

553 Fig. 1 Phylogenetic tree inferred from maximum likelihood (ML) and bayesian (BI) statistics based on
554 separate *ACT*, *BT2* and *RP60S* sequences of the *Scedosporium apiospermum* species complex, *S.*

555 *dehoogii*, *S. minutisporum*, *S. aurantiacum* and *Pseudallescheria desertorum* by the outgroup method.

556 The *S. apiospermum* species complex was marked using broken line. Bootstrap and posterior

557 probabilities values were added to respective branches (ML/BI). Branches with bootstrap support

558 values higher than 80% and/or 0.95 are indicated in bold.

559

560 Fig. 2 Midpoint-rooted phylogenetic analysis inferred from ML and BI statistics based on separate

561 *ACT*, *BT2* and *RP60S* sequences of *Scedosporium apiospermum*, *S. boydii* and *Pseudallescheria*

562 *angusta*. Bootstrap and posterior probabilities values were added to respective branches (ML/BI). The

563 strains considered as in silico recombinants were marked using coloured geometric figure.

564

565 Fig. 3 Pairwise distance sliding window analysis of five genetic loci alignments (analyzed

566 individually) showing closest inter-specific (orange whiskers) and intra-specific (blue whiskers)

567 distances (Column A) and proportion of monophyletic species over a 100 bp sliding window (Column

568 B).

569 Hypervariable alignment sections were automatically excluded, as indicated by 'gaps' for the plot

570 'proportion of species that are monophyletic' per gene (section ~140-200 bp in *BT2* and ~150-230 bp

571 in ITS region).

572

573 Fig. S1 Phylogenetic relationship inferred from maximum likelihood (ML) and bayesian (BI) statistics

574 based on separate ITS and *TEF1* sequences of the *Scedosporium apiospermum* species complex, *S.*

575 *dehoogii*, *S. minutisporum*, and *S. aurantiacum*, with *Pseudallescheria desertorum* as outgroup.
576 Bootstrap and posterior probabilities values were added to respective branches (ML/BI). Branches
577 with bootstrap support values higher than 80% and/or 0.95 are indicated in bold.

578

579 Fig. S2 Midpoint-rooted phylogenetic analysis inferred from ML and BI statistics based on separate
580 ITS and *TEF1* sequences of *Scedosporium apiospermum*, *S. boydii* and *Pseudallescheria angusta*.
581 Bootstrap and posterior probabilities values were added to respective branches (ML/BI).

582

583 Fig. S3 Phylogenetic tree inferred from maximum likelihood (ML) and bayesian (BI) statistics based
584 on concatenated *ACT*, *BT2*, *RP60S*, *TEF1* and ITS sequences of the *Scedosporium apiospermum*
585 species complex, *S. dehoogii*, *S. minutisporum*, and *S. aurantiacum*, with *Pseudallescheria desertorum*
586 as outgroup. Bootstrap and posterior probabilities values were added to respective branches (ML/BI).
587 The species complex was marked using broken line. Branches with bootstrap support values higher
588 than 80% and/or 0.95 are indicated in bold.

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Table 1. Phylogenetic distance analysis of the *S. apiospermum* species complex, *S. dehoogii*, *S. minutisporum*, *S. aurantiacum* and *P. desertorum* based on ITS, *BT2*, *ACT*, *RP60S* and *TEF1*.

Gene	ITS	BT2	ACT	TEF1	RP60S
Length (bp)	521	487-495	326-328	565	383-392
Aligned sites	521	495	328	565	393
Best model	K2	K2+G	K2+G	T92+G	T92
Conserved sites	512	425	275	553	352
Variable sites	9	20	53	12	41
Parsimony-informative sites	9	20	45	11	34
Singleton sites	1	20	8	1	9
G+C%					
<i>S. apiospermum</i> species complex	53.2–56.1%	49.7–51.6%	51.4–53.0%	56.7–57.5%	56.8–58.3%
<i>S. dehoogii</i>	53.4–55.6%	48.8–49.5%	52.5–53.5%	56.5–57.3%	57.0–58.0%
<i>S. minutisporum</i>	54.8%	49.3–49.4%	51.9–52.1%	57.2–57.3%	57.1–57.4%
<i>S. aurantiacum</i>	51.4–52.2%	48.0–48.2%	52.8–53.4%	57.4–57.6%	57.4–57.7%
Intra-specific heterogeneity					
<i>S. apiospermum</i> species complex	0.034	0.024	0.005	0.006	0.025
<i>S. dehoogii</i>	0.042	0.027	0.007	0.009	0.002
<i>S. minutisporum</i>	0.000	0.016	0.003	0.001	0.013
<i>S. aurantiacum</i>	0.002	0.003	0.012	0.001	0.002
Distances in <i>S. apiospermum</i> species complex					
<i>S. apiospermum</i> vs. <i>S. boydii</i>	0.007	0.040	0.055	0.007	0.028
<i>S. apiospermum</i> vs. <i>P. angusta</i>	0.010	0.036	0.056	0.006	0.037
<i>S. boydii</i> vs. <i>P. angusta</i>	0.003	0.022	0.037	0.007	0.025
Inter-specific distances					
<i>S. apiospermum</i> species complex vs. <i>S. dehoogii</i>	0.084	0.065	0.024	0.017	0.044
<i>S. apiospermum</i> species complex vs. <i>S. minutisporum</i>	0.108	0.076	0.021	0.017	0.065
<i>S. apiospermum</i> species complex vs. <i>S. aurantiacum</i>	0.125	0.107	0.034	0.040	0.066
Barcoding gap	0.042	0.038	0.009	0.008	0.019

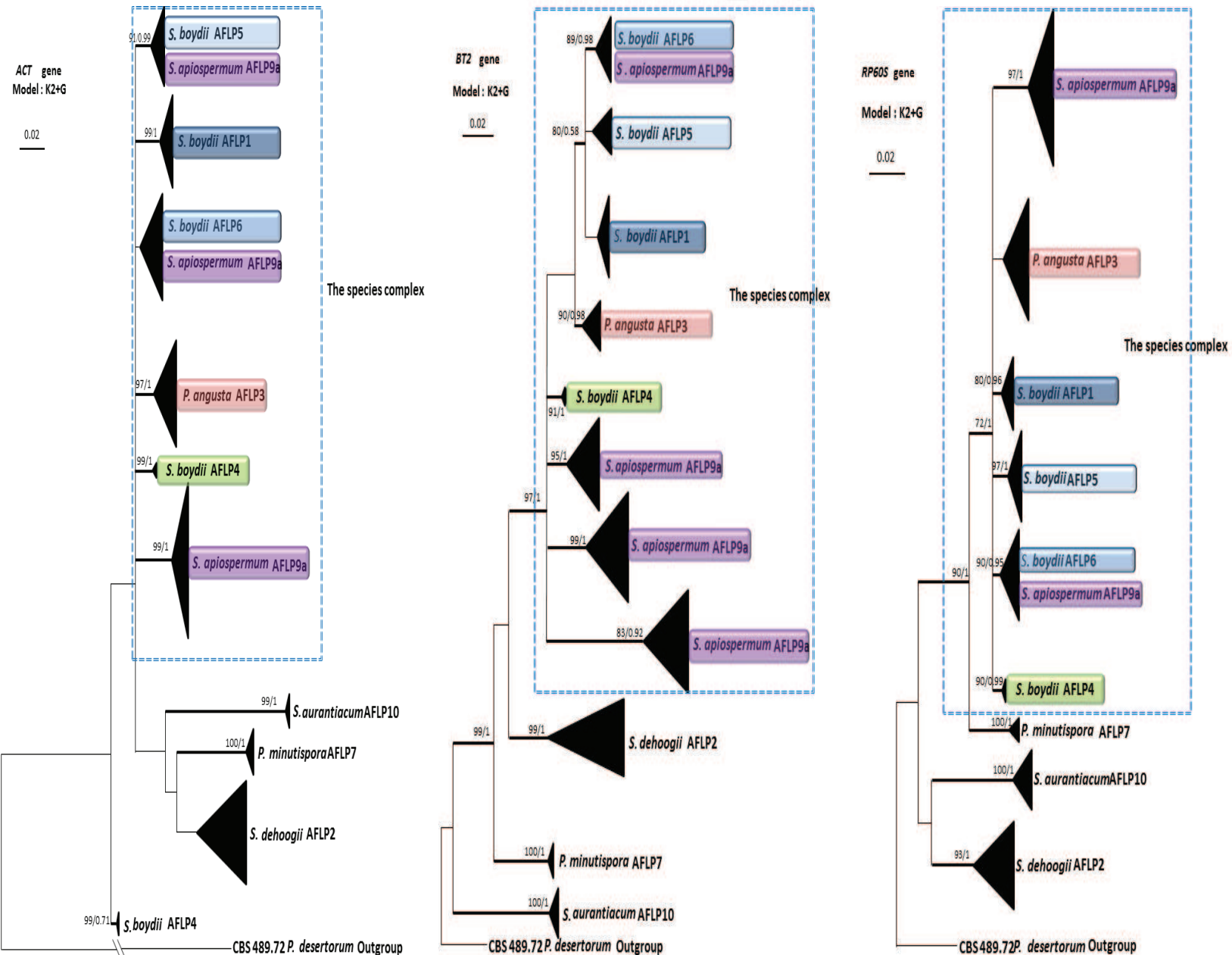
Table 2. Success rates of sequencing for each genetic locus.

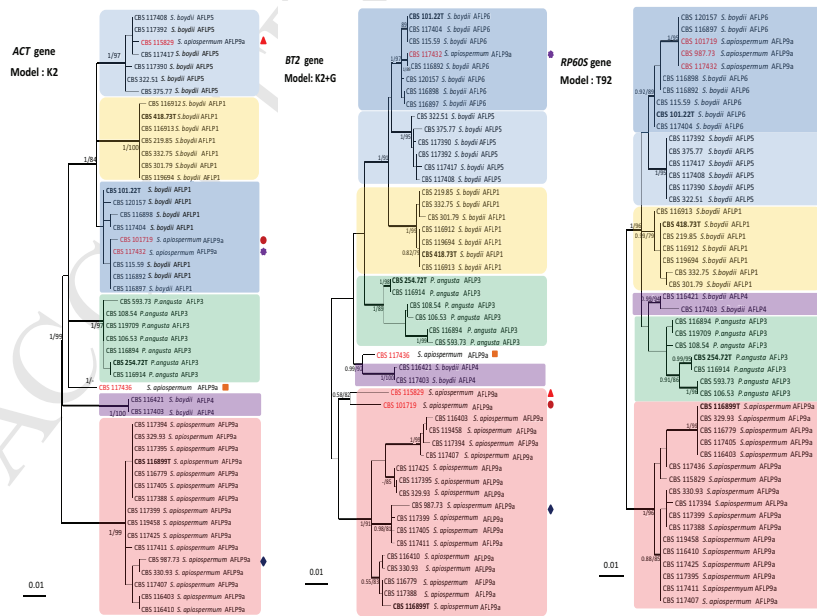
Contigs (%)	<i>S. apiospermum</i> (n=19)	<i>S. boydii</i> (n=23)	<i>P. angusta</i> (n=7)	<i>S. dehoogii</i> (n=9)	<i>S. minutisporum</i> (n=3)	<i>S. aurantiacum</i> (n=3)	<i>P. desertorum</i> (n=1)
ITS (%)	100% (19/19)	100% (23/23)	100% (7/7)	100% (9/9)	100% (3/3)	100% (3/3)	100% (1/1)
<i>BT2</i> (%)	100% (19/19)	100% (23/23)	85.7% (6/7)	100% (9/9)	100% (3/3)	100% (3/3)	100% (1/1)
<i>ACT</i> (%)	100% (19/19)	100% (23/23)	100% (7/7)	100% (9/9)	100% (3/3)	100% (3/3)	100% (1/1)
<i>RP60S</i> (%)	100% (19/19)	100% (23/23)	100% (7/7)	100% (9/9)	100% (3/3)	100% (3/3)	100% (1/1)
<i>TEF1</i> (%)	94.7% (18/19)	100% (23/23)	100% (7/7)	100% (9/9)	100% (3/3)	100% (3/3)	100% (1/1)

Table 3. Number of clades and recombinants (species association) per gene marker compared with AFLP clusters.

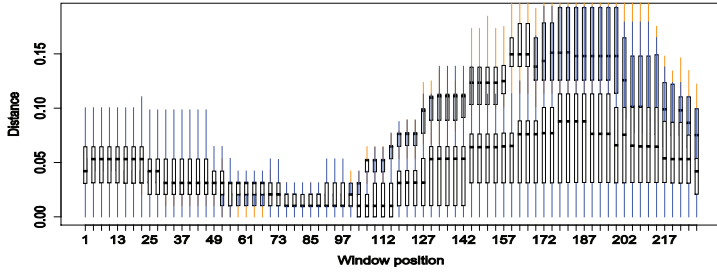
Strain ID	Gene marker: number of clades					
	<i>TEF1</i> : 3	ITS: 3	<i>RP60S</i> : 7	<i>ACT</i> : 9	<i>BT2</i> : 12	AFLP*: 7
CBS 115829	SA	SA	SA	SB	nd	SA
CBS 987.73	SA	SA	SB	SB	nd	SA
CBS 101719	SB	SA	SB	SB	SA	SA
CBS 17432	SB	SB	SB	SB	SB	SA
CBS 117436	SA	SB	SA	deviating	SA	SA

SA, *Scedosporium apiospermum*; SB, *Scedosporium boydii*; nd, no data; *AFLP results from Lackner *et al.* (2014a).





A

*ACT***Boxplots of closest non-conspecific distances (orange whiskers) and Intra-specific distances (blue whiskers) in each window**

B

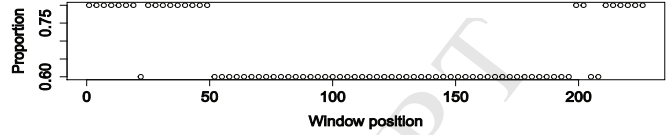
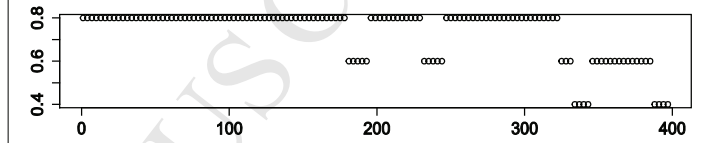
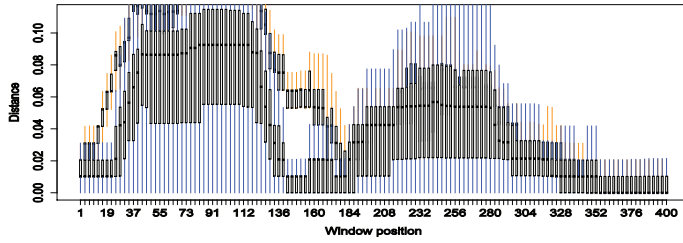
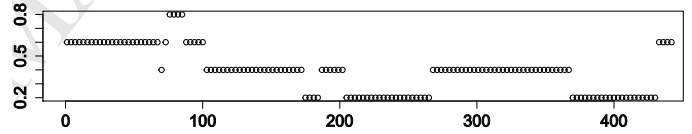
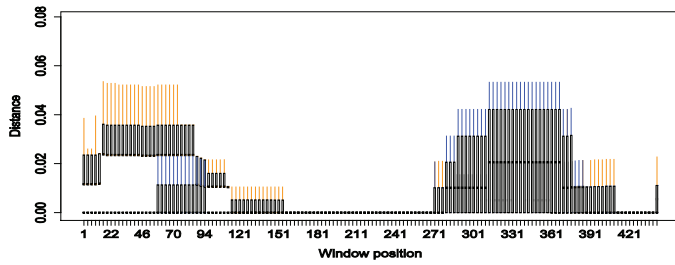
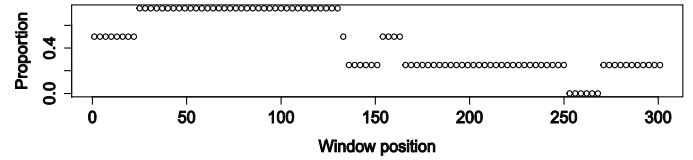
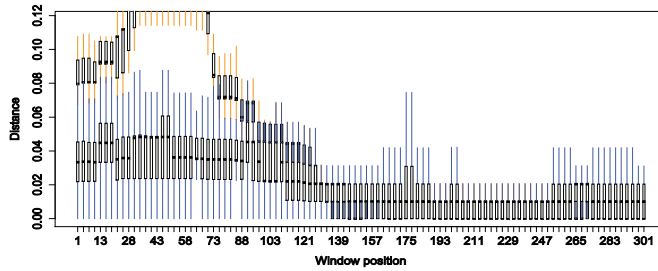
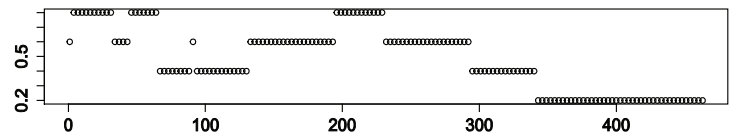
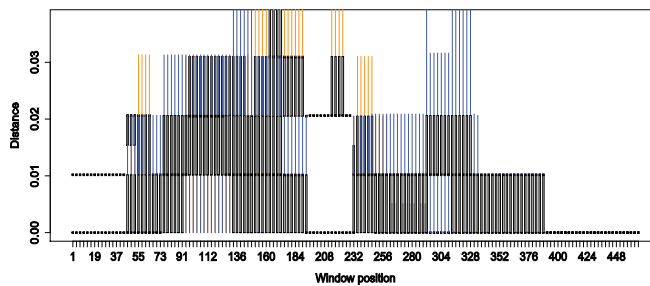
Proportion of species that are monophyletic*BT2**ITS**RP60S**TEF1*

Table S1. Isolates of the *S. apiospermum* complex and related species included in the study.

Strains	Species	<i>In silico</i> recombinant	AFLP genotype (Lackner <i>et al.</i> 2014a)	Genbank accession no.				
				ITS	<i>BT2</i>	<i>ACT</i>	<i>TEF1</i>	<i>RP60S</i>
CBS 117388	<i>S. apiospermum</i>	No	AFLP9	KT008498	KT008479	KT072637	KT069564	KT070568
CBS 117432	<i>S. apiospermum</i>	Yes	AFLP9	KT008516	KT008456	KT072660	KT069586	KT070585
CBS 116403	<i>S. apiospermum</i>	No	AFLP9	KT008508	KT008469	KT072648	ND	KT070580
CBS 987.73	<i>S. apiospermum</i>	Yes	AFLP9	KT008499	KT008478	KT072652	KT069572	KT070586
CBS 117405	<i>S. apiospermum</i>	No	AFLP9	KT008514	KT008483	KT072638	KT069565	KT070581
CBS 116779	<i>S. apiospermum</i>	No	AFLP9	KT008500	KT008480	KT072639	KT069566	KT070582
CBS 116410	<i>S. apiospermum</i>	No	AFLP9	KT008501	KT008481	KT072649	KT069573	KT070571
CBS 117425	<i>S. apiospermum</i>	No	AFLP9	KT008502	KT008475	KT072644	KT069574	KT070572
CBS 117436	<i>S. apiospermum</i>	Yes	AFLP9	KT008517	KT008487	KT072636	KT069567	KT070578
CBS 116899	<i>S. apiospermum</i>	No	AFLP9	KT008509	KT008473	KT072640	KT069575	KT070583
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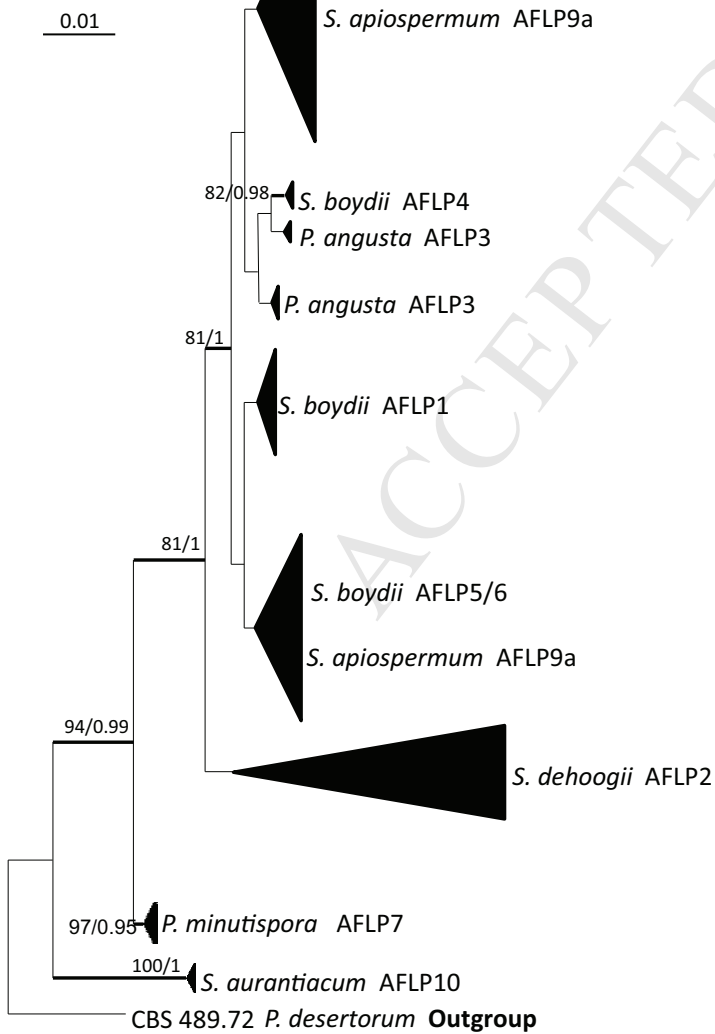
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CBS 101719	<i>S. apiospermum</i>	Yes	AFLP9	KT008504	KT008486	KT072668	KT069587	KT070587
CBS 330.93	<i>S. apiospermum</i>	No	AFLP9	KT008505	KT008482	KT072651	KT069569	KT070570
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CBS 117394	<i>S. apiospermum</i>	No	AFLP9	KT008506	KT008472	KT072642	KT069571	KT070577
CBS 329.93	<i>S. apiospermum</i>	No	AFLP9	KT008511	KT008477	KT072643	KT069578	KT070584
CBS 117407	<i>S. apiospermum</i>	No	AFLP9	KT008512	KT008471	KT072650	KT069579	KT070575
CBS 101.22	<i>S. boydii</i>	No	AFLP6	KT008518	KT008455	KT072664	KT069589	KT070590
CBS 116898	<i>S. boydii</i>	No	AFLP6	KT008520	KT008458	KT072666	KT069590	KT070593
CBS 115.59	<i>S. boydii</i>	No	AFLP6	KT008522	KT008454	KT072661	KT069591	KT070592
CBS 116897	<i>S. boydii</i>	No	AFLP6	KT008524	KT008459	KT072663	KT069593	KT070589
CBS 120157	<i>S. boydii</i>	No	AFLP6	KT008519	KT008460	KT072665	KT069588	KT070588
CBS 117404	<i>S. boydii</i>	No	AFLP6	KT008521	KT008453	KT072667	KT069600	KT070591

CBS 116892	<i>S. boydii</i>	No	AFLP6 unassigned	KT008523	KT008457	KT072662	KT069592	KT070594
CBS 117408	<i>S. boydii</i>	No	AFLP5 unassigned	KT008527	KT008462	KT072670	KT069596	KT070606
CBS 375.77	<i>S. boydii</i>	No	AFLP5	KT008525	KT008463	KT072675	KT069594	KT070604
CBS 117392	<i>S. boydii</i>	No	AFLP5	KT008530	KT008466	KT072671	KT069599	KT070609
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CBS 117417	<i>S. boydii</i>	No	AFLP5	KT008526	KT008464	KT072674	KT069595	KT070605
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CBS 116421	<i>S. boydii</i>	No	AFLP4	KT008531	KT008488	KT072683	KT069582	KT070602
CBS 117403	<i>S. boydii</i>	No	AFLP4	KT008532	KT008489	KT072684	KT069583	KT070603
CBS 119458	<i>S. boydii</i>	No	AFLP unnamed	KT008507	KT008470	KT072646	KT069580	KT070576
CBS 418.73	<i>S. boydii</i>	No	AFLP1	KT008540	KT008449	KT072676	KT069601	KT070595
CBS 116913	<i>S. boydii</i>	No	AFLP1	KT008541	KT008446	KT072677	KT069602	KT070599
CBS 219.85	<i>S. boydii</i>	No	AFLP1	KT008542	KT008450	KT072678	KT069603	KT070596
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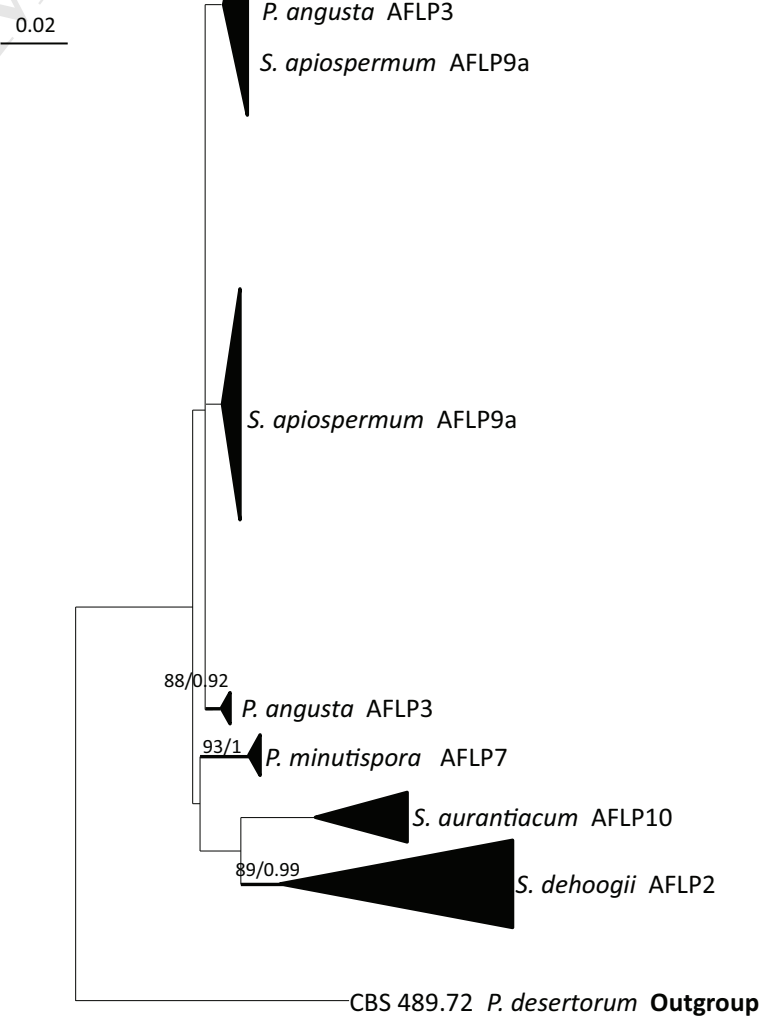
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CBS 119694	<i>S. boydii</i>	No	AFLP1	KT008546	KT008448	KT072681	KT069607	KT070598
CBS 108.54	<i>P. angusta</i>	No	AFLP3	KT008533	KT008442	KT072653	KT069581	KT070610
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CBS 254.72	<i>P. angusta</i>	No	AFLP3	KT008538	KT008467	KT072657	KT069619	KT070613
CBS 593.73	<i>P. angusta</i>	No	AFLP3	KT008534	KT008445	KT072659	KT069620	KT070615
CBS 119709	<i>P. angusta</i>	No	AFLP3	KT008537	ND	KT072655	KT069585	KT070612
CBS 116914	<i>P. angusta</i>	No	AFLP3	KT008539	KT008468	KT072658	KT069621	KT070614
CBS 106.53	<i>P. angusta</i>	No	AFLP3	KT008535	KT008443	KT072656	KT069622	KT070616
CBS 117415	<i>S. dehoogii</i>	No	AFLP2 unnamed	KT008547	KT008490	KT072687	KT069623	KT070620
CBS 101720	<i>S. dehoogii</i>	No	AFLP2	KT008554	KT008496	KT072686	KT069611	KT070623
CBS 499.90	<i>S. dehoogii</i>	No	AFLP2	KT008548	KT008497	KT072685	KT069608	KT070621
CBS 117406	<i>S. dehoogii</i>	No	AFLP2	KT163400	KT163401	KT072689	KT069615	KT070625

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CBS 117393	<i>S. dehoogii</i>	No	AFLP2	KT008553	KT008495	KT072688	KT069610	KT070624
CBS 117387	<i>S. dehoogii</i>	No	AFLP2	KT008552	KT008494	KT072691	KT069609	KT070622
CBS 101724	<i>S. dehoogii</i>	No	AFLP2	KT008549	KT008493	KT072693	KT069614	KT070628
CBS 100396	<i>S. minutisporum</i>	No	AFLP7	KT008555	KT008440	KT072694	KT069616	KT070617
CBS 116911	<i>S. minutisporum</i>	No	AFLP7	KT008556	KT008441	KT072695	KT069617	KT070618
CBS 116595	<i>S. minutisporum</i>	No	AFLP7	KT008557	KT008439	KT072696	KT069618	KT070619
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CBS 103.44	<i>S. aurantiacum</i>	No	AFLP10	KT008559	KT008437	KT072698	KT069625	KT070630
CBS 117426	<i>S. aurantiacum</i>	No	AFLP10	KT008560	KT008435	KT072699	KT069626	KT070631
CBS 489.72	<i>S. desertorum</i>	No	Outgroup	KT008561	KT008438	KT072700	KT069627	KT070632

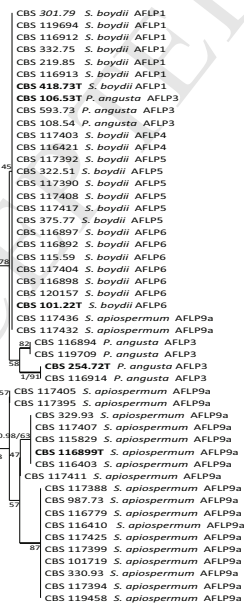
TEF1 genetic locus
Model : T92+G



ITS region
Model : K2+G

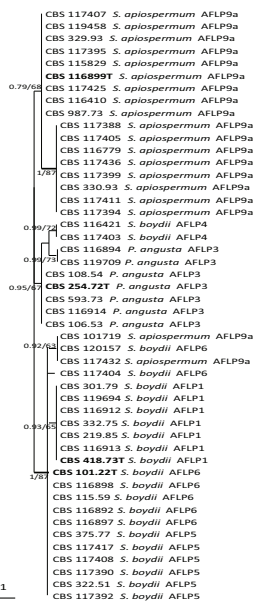


ITS
Model: K2



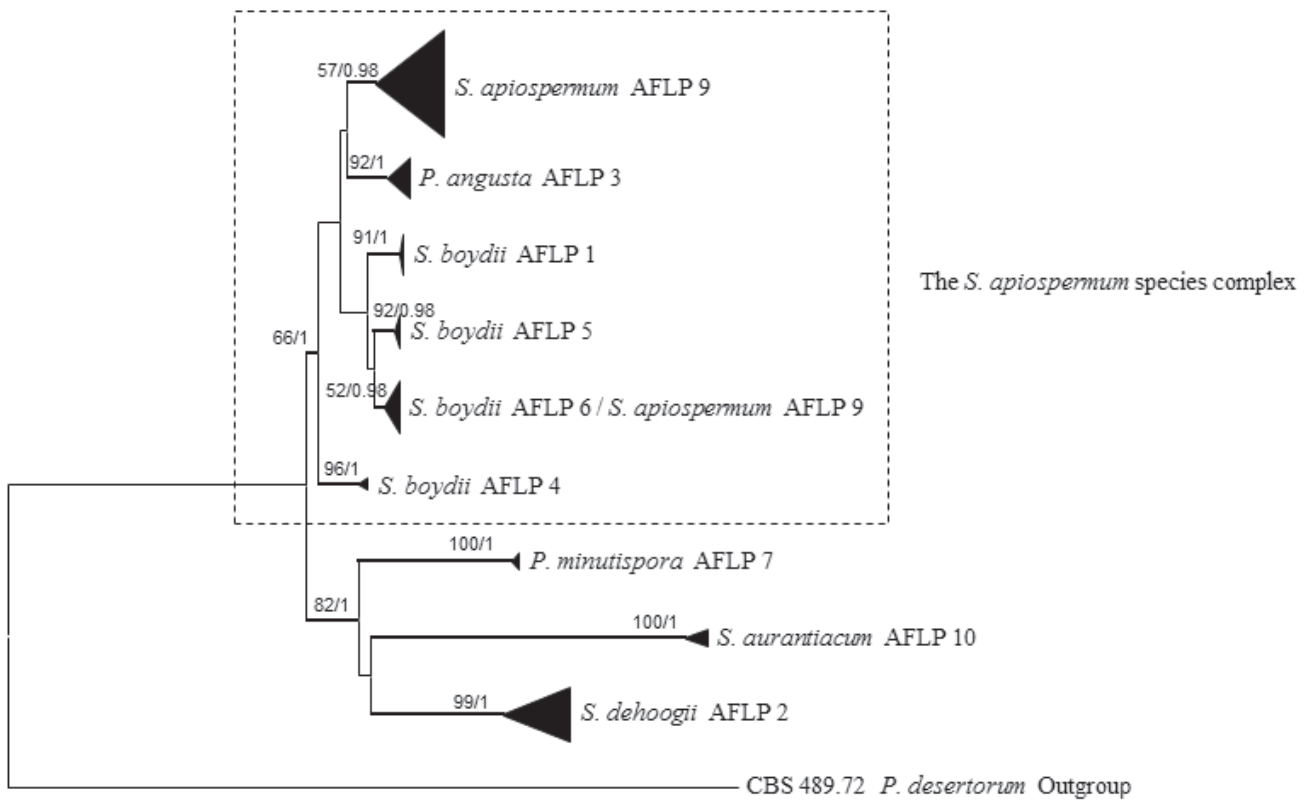
0.01

TEF1
Model: T92



0.01

MANUSCRIPT



0.02