

Strain 0122, a Contaminating Skin Corynebacterium

TO THE EDITOR:

In a numerical taxonomic study on vaginal coryneform bacteria and possibly related organisms (²), we included strain 0122, received from J. Delville, Brussels, Belgium. Strain 0122 was isolated from a leproma and is claimed to be a diphtheroid form of *Mycobacterium leprae* (¹). In total, 145 differential characters were analyzed using the simple matching, jaccard, and pattern coefficients. Cluster composition was not markedly affected by the coefficient used or by test error, estimated at 6.5%. Strain 0122 clustered closely (>85%, simple matching coefficient) with reference strains of *Corynebacterium* species (*Corynebacterium diphtheriae* NCTC 3984, *C. diphtheriae* ITG 121, *Corynebacterium pseudotuberculosis* NCTC 3450, and *Corynebacterium xerosis* NCTC 9755). Our hypothesis is that strain 0122 is, in fact, a

contaminating skin corynebacterium rather than *M. leprae*.

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Thyroxine and Leprosy

TO THE EDITOR:

My interest in the possible harmful effect of giving thyroxine or dried thyroid tablets to leprosy patients dates from the 1950s when I saw an adult Eurasian female with active lepromatous leprosy who gave a history of having consulted her family doctor a few months previously because of edema of legs, thickening of the skin of the face and limbs, thinning of eyebrows, and a hoarse voice. She was treated with dried thyroid tablets on the assumption that her symptoms were due to myxedema, and when she reported for follow-up examination, her doctor was surprised to see papules and nodules on her skin and promptly referred her for a second opinion.

I recall reading, about that time, a report of clinical manifestations of lepromatous leprosy appearing in an obese female patient who was being treated with dried thyroid tablets in the hope of reducing her weight, but I am unable to trace the reference. Can any reader supply me with it or with any other references on this subject? It is probable that any condition associated with a sustained increase in the level of cir-

culating thyroxine can have a deleterious effect on leprosy, and I have postulated that one of the factors responsible for downgrading of leprosy during pregnancy is the progressive rise in serum thyroxine (T₄) to twice the normal figure by the 3rd trimester (²). It has been reported that the addition of thyroxine sodium to a culture medium produces a metabolic stimulating action on *M. leprae* (¹), and I would be interested to hear if anyone has observed the effect of raising the level of circulating thyroxine in laboratory animals infected with *M. leprae*.

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