

1 **Disseminated *Scedosporium/Pseudallescheria* infection after double-lung**
2 **transplantation in patients with cystic fibrosis: case report and review of**
3 **the literature**

4

5 **Running title:** *P. boydii* infection after lung transplantation

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23 **Abstract**

24 We report a case of disseminated *Scedosporium/Pseudallescheria* infection due to *P. boydii*
25 *sensu stricto* after lung transplantation in a patient with cystic fibrosis. Dissemination
26 occurred under voriconazole. Despite surgery and combination therapy with voriconazole,
27 caspofungin and terbinafine, the patient died 8 months after transplantation. Previously
28 reported cases are reviewed.

29

30 Case report

31 A 37-year-old woman suffering from cystic fibrosis (CF) was admitted to our institution in
32 April 2008 for double-lung transplantation. Her medical history included diabetes mellitus
33 since 2002, and more than 10 years of airway colonization with *Aspergillus fumigatus* and
34 *Scedosporium/Pseudallescheria*. Since 2006, and while awaiting transplantation, she received
35 oral voriconazole (250 mg, twice a day). Her post-operative course was relatively
36 uncomplicated except for cytomegalovirus infection (CMV) due to a mismatch at the time of
37 transplantation in spite of valganciclovir prophylactic treatment (900 mg/day). The
38 immunosuppressive regimen included tacrolimus (therapeutic range 12-13.5 ng/mL),
39 mycophenolate mophetil (750 mg/day) and prednisone (37.5 mg/day). Oral voriconazole was
40 continued as long-term post-transplantation prophylaxis (250 mg twice a day). Fungal culture
41 of a bronchial secretion performed the day after transplantation was positive for a filamentous
42 fungus routinely identified as *S. apiospermum*/*P. boydii* (isolate I) but several other
43 respiratory specimens performed over the following weeks were negative. The patient was
44 discharged from hospital on day 45 after transplantation, still taking voriconazole.
45 Voriconazole serum level, checked regularly (1.06, 1.96, 1.69, on days 26, 36 and 50 mg/L
46 respectively) was within therapeutic limits (1-2.5 mg/L) except for two occasions (0.16 and
47 0.35 mg/L on days 18 and 64 respectively).

48 In June (day 70), she presented at our hospital with nodules on her legs that had appeared 2
49 weeks previously. On examination the nodules were fibrous, dermo-hypodermic, measuring
50 1–2 cm in diameter, and slightly pigmented on the surface. A biopsy was performed.
51 Histopathological microscopic examination (Gomori-Grocott and Periodic Acid-Schiff
52 stainings) revealed an inflammatory infiltrate along with several branched and septate hyaline
53 hyphae (fungal cultures were not performed). Continuation of voriconazole in association

54 with a reduced dose of corticosteroid was associated with clinical improvement. However, 3
55 weeks later, a new biopsy was performed and septate hyphae were again seen on direct
56 examination. Fungal culture of this biopsy was positive for *S. apiospermum*/*P. boydii* (isolate
57 II). At this time, chest computed tomography (CT) was unremarkable and no sign of
58 dissemination was noted on brain CT and the nodules disappeared over the following weeks.
59 All the while, positive CMV DNAemia was still detected in spite of successive curative
60 treatments with per os valganciclovir (1800 mg/day from day 63 to 80), intravenous
61 ganciclovir (from day 80 to 97) and finally foscarnet (from day 97 to 115 and 138 to 151).
62 Cytomegalovirus infection was associated with fever, leucopenia and digestive symptoms. In
63 August (day 138), a CMV strain resistant to both ganciclovir (L595F mutation on UL97 gene)
64 and foscarnet (E756D mutation on UL54 gene) was detected. Since then CMV infection could
65 not be controlled by antiviral therapy, leading to high viral loads ranging from 5 to 6.7
66 log₁₀cop/10⁶ cells.

67 At the beginning of November (day 213), while still taking voriconazole, she was referred to
68 our hospital for acute vestibular syndrome, dizziness, and dysarthria. On examination, the
69 patient presented with left complete hemiplegia. Cerebral magnetic resonance imaging
70 revealed a large ischemic region located in the right sylvian area (Figure 1). A few days later,
71 a blood culture (BACTEC Mycosis IC/F, Becton Dickinson, Sparks, Md.) performed on
72 admission was positive on direct examination for branched and septate hyaline hyphae, with
73 terminal conidial cells suggestive of *Scedosporium/Pseudallescheria* (Figure 2A). At the
74 same time, a large vegetation was observed on the mitral valve by transesophageal
75 echography. No evidence of dissemination to the kidneys, liver or spleen was detected by CT.
76 Subcultures of the blood culture grew *S. apiospermum*/*P. boydii* (Figure 2B, isolate III). MICs
77 against voriconazole, posaconazole and caspofungin were determined with the E-test (0.002,
78 3 and >32 µg/mL, respectively) and the isolate was sent to the French National Reference

79 Center for Mycoses and Antifungals (CNRMA, Institut Pasteur, Paris, France) for antifungal
80 susceptibility testing according to European Committee on Antimicrobial Susceptibility
81 Testing standardized methodology (EUCAST) (27). The antifungal susceptibility profile was
82 in agreement with previous results, with a low MIC to voriconazole (0.5 $\mu\text{g}/\text{mL}$) but higher
83 MICs to posaconazole ($\geq 8 \mu\text{g}/\text{mL}$) and caspofungin (2 $\mu\text{g}/\text{mL}$).

84 In light of probable fungal endocarditis emerging while on voriconazole therapy, caspofungin
85 was added on day 220 (70 mg/kg/day as a loading dose followed by 50 mg/kg/day). Three
86 days later, the combination therapy was reinforced with terbinafine (250 mg/day) and
87 caspofungin was increased to 150 mg/day. This combination therapy was associated with
88 clinical improvement allowing valve replacement and excision of the vegetation on day 228.
89 Several septate hyphae and conidial formation typical of *Scedosporium/Pseudallescheria*
90 were observed on direct examination of the vegetation (Figure 2C). Fungal cultures yielded *S.*
91 *apiospermum/P.boydii* confirming the diagnosis of fungal endocarditis (isolate IV). The day
92 after surgery, a bronchial specimen was also positive for *S. apiospermum/P. boydii* (isolate
93 V). The patient's condition improved slightly in the following days but neurological
94 deterioration with headache was observed on day 240. Death occurred the day after due to a
95 massive cerebral hemorrhage.

96 Molecular identification of each of the five isolates was performed by amplification and
97 sequencing of a region within the β -tubulin gene (519-bp), calmodulin gene (633-bp),
98 internal transcribed spacer (575-bp) and D1-D2 region of 28S ribosomal DNA (568-bp), and
99 yielded 100%, 99.5%, 99.3 % and 100% homology, respectively, with the sequences
100 (nucleotide accession numbers AJ890121, AJ890207, AY213680 and AY213623) of the type
101 strain of *P. boydii sensu stricto* (CBS 101.22)(14). Random amplified polymorphic DNA
102 (RAPD) genotyping performed using GC70, UBC-701 and UBC-703 primers as described
103 previously revealed a unique RAPD pattern for the five *P. boydii* isolates (9).

104 Nucleotide sequences have been deposited in GenBank database under accession numbers
105 GU180097 to GU180101, GU186103 to GU186107, GU192438 to GU192442 and
106 GU213261 to GU213265.

107

108 **Discussion**

109 *Scedosporium/Pseudallescheria* species are ubiquitous, saprophytic, filamentous fungi found
110 widely in the environment, but are also increasingly recognized as opportunistic pathogens.

111 The clinical spectrum of these infections ranges from localized disease to disseminated
112 infection, with a poor prognosis in solid-organ or Hematopoietic Stem Cell Transplant
113 Recipients (HSCT) transplant recipients and patients with haematological malignancies
114 especially when dissemination or fungemia occur (7, 18, 26). Colonization of the respiratory
115 tract by *Scedosporium/Pseudallescheria* is common in patients with CF, where it is the
116 second most frequent filamentous fungus after *A. fumigatus* with a prevalence ranging from
117 5.7–10% (6, 21, 31). Despite this high prevalence, disseminated

118 *Scedosporium/Pseudallescheria* infections remain rare in patients with CF, even in highly
119 immunosuppressed patients such as those undergoing lung transplantation (1, 5, 24, 25, 28).

120 Here we present a case involving a patient who had several years of known airway
121 colonization with *S. apiospermum/P. boydii* and was admitted to our institution for double-
122 lung transplantation. The patient subsequently developed a fatal disseminated infection due to
123 *P. boydii sensu stricto*.

124 To the best of our knowledge, only 5 patients with CF who developed invasive scedosporiosis
125 after lung transplantation have been reported in the literature since 1996 (reviewed in Table
126 1). Most of them had a history of airway colonization with *Scedosporium/Pseudallescheria*
127 before transplantation. All but one were treated with antifungal combinations but the
128 mortality was 100%. The median time from transplantation to the onset of infection was 5

129 weeks (range, 2 weeks–7,5 months). According to Husain et al., the median time to infection
130 in solid-organ transplant recipients was 4 months in the case of *S. apiospermum* infection and
131 earlier when *S. prolificans* was involved (18). The colonization with
132 *Scedosporium/Pseudallescheria* at the time of transplantation could explain the shorter time
133 to infection in patients with CF. Apart from the present case, dissemination to the skin was
134 noted in two other patients (patients 4 and 5). This highlights that the recovery of filamentous
135 fungi from cutaneous lesions in patients with CF who undergo lung transplantation, even
136 without other clinical manifestations, requires complementary investigations.

137 In the present case, a fatal outcome occurred despite valve replacement and salvage therapy
138 based on a combination of voriconazole, caspofungin and terbinafine. Regarding the pre-
139 transplantation period, it is interesting to note that *Scedosporium/Pseudallescheria* was
140 isolated repeatedly from respiratory tract specimens from our patient despite long-term
141 voriconazole prophylaxis. Clearly, the fungemia and central nervous system involvement
142 were poor prognostic factors in our patient. Indeed, fungemia has been clearly associated with
143 a higher mortality rate in transplant recipients (18). However, the underlying, rampant and
144 multi-resistant CMV infection in our patient must also be considered. Indeed, CMV infection
145 has been associated with an increased risk of invasive aspergillosis in solid-organ transplant
146 recipients, but data are still lacking for scedosporiosis (10, 19). Finally, the difficulty
147 encountered in maintaining voriconazole plasma levels within therapeutic limits must also be
148 considered. The pharmacokinetic variability of voriconazole levels in patients with CF, that
149 can be responsible to underdosage and therefore inefficacy of antifungal therapy has been
150 described in a previous study showing that voriconazole levels is often undetectable in such
151 patients (3). In our patient cutaneous nodules appeared when the voriconazole serum level
152 was low, despite any discontinuation of voriconazole therapy (day 64, 0.35 mg/L). However,

153 we are not sure that the breakthrough in our patient is the result of voriconazole underdosage,
154 all other dosages, performed monthly, being within the therapeutic range.

155 *Scedosporium/Pseudallescheria* species are generally considered to have a low *in vitro*
156 susceptibility to antifungal drugs that can also differ between species (12). According to both
157 *in vitro* and *in vivo* studies voriconazole could be the most effective antifungal agent, but no
158 recommendations regarding the optimal antifungal therapy for scedosporiosis have yet
159 emerged (12, 29). In particular, the benefit of antifungal combination therapy has not been
160 clearly established despite the increasing number of reports describing a favorable outcome
161 with voriconazole in combination with terbinafine and/or caspofungin (15–17, 22). The *in*
162 *vitro* study of 35 antifungal combinations against *S. apiospermum* and *S. prolificans*
163 describing a potent synergy between azole drugs and echinocandins will probably reopen the
164 debate on combination therapy (8, 23). Promising results obtained with new antifungal agents
165 such as miltefosine remain to be confirmed (20, 30). In the present case, it is interesting to
166 note the reliability of the E-test for MIC determination against *Scedosporium* species, as
167 MICs obtained by E-test were generally correlated with those obtained by the EUCAST
168 method, especially for voriconazole. The moderately high MIC to caspofungin found in this
169 has also been reported by others (8). Despite these high *in vitro* MICs, both caspofungin and
170 terbinafine have been associated with a favorable outcome in clinical practice highlighting
171 that the results of antifungal susceptibility testing must be considered with caution since no
172 correlation between MIC data and clinical success has been described to date for
173 *Scedosporium/Pseudallescheria* (16, 17, 22).

174 Recent advances in molecular methods have led to a revision of *Pseudallescheria* taxonomy,
175 revealing that *Pseudallescheria boydii* is a species complex. Importantly, *P. boydii*, formerly
176 considered as the sexual state of *Scedosporium apiospermum* (i.e. teleomorph), must now be
177 considered as a distinct species and new species have also recently been identified (11, 14).

178 Despite being difficult and time-consuming in routine practice, identification of
179 *Scedosporium/Pseudallescheria* to the species level is important because virulence and
180 antifungal susceptibility can differ significantly between species (2, 12, 13). Here, molecular
181 typing performed using DNA sequencing at four loci revealed that the five isolates belonged
182 to *P. boydii sensu stricto*. Finally, RAPD genotyping revealed that the five *P. boydii* isolates
183 recovered over a 7.5-month period and from different anatomic sites had the same RAPD
184 pattern, suggesting that a single strain of *P. boydii* was responsible for the breakthrough
185 infection in our patient. Unfortunately, the *Scedosporium/Pseudallescheria* strains isolated
186 before transplantation were not available for analysis.

187

188 This report demonstrates again, the rare but mostly fatal, risk of invasive
189 *Scedosporium/Pseudallescheria* infections in patients with CF. In this setting, the utility of a
190 screening of fungal airway colonization to detect patients having a risk of infection need to be
191 discuss. According to a recent article, the choice of media used for culture specimens could
192 influence the rate of recovery of *Scedosporium* species, a better recovery rate being described
193 with SceSel+ media (4). Importantly, without any guidelines, the management of patients
194 colonized with *Scedosporium/Pseudallescheria* remains, at present, mainly based on the own
195 experience of each center and there is probably variations in practice between center/country.
196 In Nantes, France, CF patients are regularly screened for fungal colonization of their
197 respiratory tract. Those being colonized with *Scedosporium/Pseudallescheria* and having a
198 deterioration of lung function are given voriconazole that is in our experience, generally
199 associated with a clinical improvement. Regarding the time to infection, we suggest that both
200 clinical and microbiological surveillance using blood cultures as well as respiratory tract
201 specimens, focused mainly on the first weeks after transplantation, could be beneficial for the
202 early diagnosis of these life-threatening infections. Finally, in light of this and previously

203 reported cases, several questions must be raised: (1) does *Scedosporium/Pseudallescheria*
204 airway colonization represent a risk factor for invasive infection after transplantation in
205 patients with CF and should it be a contraindication to transplantation ? (2) Is antifungal
206 prophylaxis before and after transplantation really effective in this setting and which
207 antifungal(s) should be administered ? (3) Regarding antifungal therapy, is voriconazole
208 really the most effective drug and what will be the role of new agents such as miltefosine ?
209 Larger studies are now warranted to answer to these questions and establish guidelines for the
210 management of *Scedosporium/Pseudallescheria* in patients with CF.

211

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334

335 **Figure legends**

336 **Table 1.** Clinical characteristics of reported cases of invasive scedosporiosis in patients with
337 cystic fibrosis after lung transplantation

338 NA: not available; ITC: itraconazole; MIC: miconazole; VRC: voriconazole; POS:
339 posaconazole; AMB: amphotericin B; CAS: caspofungin; TRB: terbinafine; LTx: lung
340 transplantation; CNS: central nervous system.

341 ¹Diagnosis was made on brain biopsy.

342 ²Intraocular miconazole.

343 **Figure 1.** Cerebral magnetic resonance imaging showing a large ischemic region located in
344 the right area.

345 **Figure 2.** (A) Direct microscopic examination of the blood culture showing hyphae and
346 conidia (x 500). (B) Lactophenol cotton blue stain of the fungal culture from blood showing
347 septate hyphae and sessile conidia (x 1000). (C) Direct examination of the cardiac vegetation
348 showing several septate hyphae along with conidial formation (x 400).

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Patient	Age	Sex	Colonization before LTA	Antifungal prophylaxis after LTx	Time to diagnosis after LTx	Mycological identification	Antifungal therapy	Sites / clinical manifestations	Survival after the diagnosis	Outcome	Reference
1	27	M	NA	NO	6 weeks ¹	<i>S. apiospermum/P. boydii</i>	AMB	CNS	NA	death	(1)
2	24	F	NO	NO	7,5 months	<i>S. apiospermum/P. boydii</i>	ITC+MIC	Heart, spleen, kidneys, CNS	4 weeks	death	(24)
3	30	M	YES	NO	2 weeks	<i>S. apiospermum/P. boydii</i>	AMB+MIC	Femur, pleuritis, peritonitis	1 week	death	(5)
4	26	F	YES	YES (ITC, AMB)	3 weeks	<i>S. apiospermum/P. boydii</i>	YRC+MIC ²	Skin nodules, endophthalmitis, meningitis	6 months	death	(28)
5	19	F	YES	YES (VRC)	4 weeks	<i>S. apiospermum/P. boydii</i>	VRC+CAS+TRB followed by POS	Skin nodules, endophthalmitis, pansinusitis, chest wall cellulitis, mediastinitis, vertebral osteomyelitis, septic arthritis	14 months	death	(25)
6	37	F	YES	YES (VRC)	3 weeks	<i>P. boydii</i>	VRC+CAS+TRB	Skin nodules, endocarditis, CNS	6 months	death	This article



