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Pseudonocardia abyssalis sp. nov. and *Pseudonocardia oceani* sp. nov., two novel actinomycetes isolated from the deep Southern Ocean

Jonathan Parra, Sylvia Soldatou†, Liam M. Rooney‡ and Katherine R. Duncan*

Abstract

The actinomycetes strains KRD168^T and KRD185^T were isolated from sediments collected from the deep Southern Ocean and, in this work, they are described as representing two novel species of the genus *Pseudonocardia* through a polyphasic approach. Despite sharing >99% 16S rRNA gene sequence similarity with other members of the genus, comparative genomic analysis allowed species delimitation based on average nucleotide identity and digital DNA–DNA hybridization. The KRD168^T genome is characterized by a size of 6.31 Mbp and a G+C content of 73.44 mol%, while the KRD185^T genome has a size of 6.82 Mbp and a G+C content of 73.98 mol%. Both strains contain *meso*-diaminopimelic acid as the diagnostic diamino acid, glucose as the major whole-cell sugar, MK-8(H₄) as a major menaquinone and *iso*-branched hexadecanoic acid as a major fatty acid. Biochemical and fatty acid analyses also revealed differences between these strains and their phylogenetic neighbours, supporting their status as distinct species. The names *Pseudonocardia abyssalis* sp. nov. (type strain KRD168^T=DSM 111918^T=NCIMB 15270^T) and *Pseudonocardia oceani* (type strain KRD185^T=DSM 111919^T=NCIMB 15269^T) are proposed.

The genus *Pseudonocardia* was described for the first time by Hassen [1] and the description was subsequently amended [2–5]. Members of the genus *Pseudonocardia* are aerobic, Gram-positive, non-motile, catalase-positive bacteria. Typically, strains form branched substrate hyphae that may fragment into rod-shaped elements. Aerial hyphae, if formed, can be sterile, may be fragmented into chains of oval or square elements, or may differentiate into chains of spores. Substrate and aerial hyphae show cell division in different directions with a tendency to form swellings. Spores are usually smooth and may be formed on the substrate or aerial hyphae. The major menaquinone is MK-8(H₄) and the predominant fatty acid is *iso*-branched hexadecanoic acid, while mycolic acids are absent [6].

According to the List of Prokaryotic names with Standing in Nomenclature (LPSN), at the time of writing 63 species have been described for the genus *Pseudonocardia* with

validly published names [7, 8]. In particular, this genus has been reported as including actinomycetes commonly isolated from marine sediments [9, 10]. Thus, a few species have been described from marine environments such as mangrove forest [11], coastal [12], bathyal [13], abyssal [14] and hadal [15] sediments.

In a preceding study, strains KRD168^T and KRD185^T were isolated from sediments collected in the deep Southern Ocean, showing potential as producers of antimicrobial metabolites [16, 17]. Therefore, this work aims to describe them as representing two novel species, *Pseudonocardia abyssalis* sp. nov. and *Pseudonocardia oceani* sp. nov.

ISOLATION AND ECOLOGY

The isolation of strains KRD168^T and KRD185^T was reported previously by Millán-Aguíñaga *et al.* [16]. Briefly, marine

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Keywords: Actinobacteria; ocean; *Pseudonocardia*; sediments.

Abbreviations: ANI, average nucleotide identity; autoMLST, automated multi-locus species tree; dDDH, digital DNA–DNA hybridization; ISP, International *Streptomyces* Project.

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The Whole Genome Sequencing project has been deposited at NCBI under BioProject PRJNA678748. The Whole Genome Shotgun project has been deposited at DDBJ/ENA/GenBank under accessions JADQDK000000000 and JADQDF000000000. The versions described in this paper are JADQDK010000000 and JADQDF010000000. The GenBank accession number for the 16S rRNA gene sequences are MH725312 and MH725295. Four supplementary tables and three supplementary figures are available with the online version of this article.

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sediment cores were obtained by the PS *Polarstern* (2002) during the ANDEEP II expedition. KRD168^T was isolated from dark greenish-grey silty clay collected in the North Weddell Kosminski Fracture Zone (62° 57.56' S 27° 53.23' W) at a depth of 4539 m, while KRD185^T was isolated from greenish-grey silty clay collected in the Weddell Abyssal Plain (65° 19.88' S 48° 5.58' W) at a depth of 4060 m [18]. The strains were isolated on artificial seawater agar (SW; Instant Ocean sea salt 18 g l⁻¹, agar 14 g l⁻¹) using the stamping method [19]. The strains were routinely cultured on ISP2 agar [20] supplemented with artificial seawater (18 g l⁻¹) and stored at -80°C as glycerol suspensions (20%).

16S rRNA GENE PHYLOGENY

The almost-complete 16S rRNA gene sequences of strains KRD168^T and KRD185^T were obtained by PCR amplification using the 3-IDT (Integrated DNA Technology) primers FC27 (5'-AGAGTTTGTATCCTGGCTCAG-3') and RC1492 (5'-TACGGCTACCTTGTTACGACTT-3') [21]. Sequences were compared to those within the National Center for Biotechnology Information (NCBI) database using the Basic Local Alignment Search Tool (BLAST) [22], and EzBioCloud [23]. A multiple alignment of all the sequences was achieved by using CLUSTAL X 2.1 [24], and their evolutionary relationships were assessed using neighbour-joining tree [25] reconstructions based on the Tamura-Nei model [26] using MEGA X [27] with 1000 bootstrap replications [28]. The nearly complete (93.1%) 16S rRNA gene sequence of strain KRD168^T was found to be closely related to *Pseudonocardia petroleophila* ATCC 15777^T (99.6%), *Pseudonocardia hydrocarbonoxydans* NRRL B-16171^T (99.4%) and *Pseudonocardia seranimata* YIM 63233^T (99.3%). Similarly, the nearly complete (95.0%) 16S rRNA gene sequence of strain KRD185^T was closely related to *Pseudonocardia broussonetiae* Gen01^T (99.6%), *P. petroleophila* ATCC 15777^T (98.9%), *P. hydrocarbonoxydans* NRRL B-16171^T (98.4%) and *P. seranimata* YIM 63233^T (98.4%). The neighbour-joining phylogenetic tree (Fig. 1) showed that both isolates formed a monophyletic group with *P. petroleophila* ATCC 15777^T, *P. seranimata* YIM 63233^T and *P. broussonetiae* Gen01^T. In particular, strain KRD168^T, *P. seranimata* YIM 63233^T and *P. petroleophila* ATCC 15777^T were part of the same branch, while strain KRD185^T and *P. broussonetiae* Gen01^T formed a second branch. This topology was also supported by the maximum-likelihood and maximum-parsimony trees (Fig. S1, available in the online version of this article).

GENOME FEATURES

A modified organic DNA extraction protocol [29] was performed for DNA isolation from strains KRD168^T and KRD185^T. Genomic DNA was sequenced at MicrobesNG for short-read sequencing. Genomic DNA libraries were prepared using a Nextera XT Library Prep Kit and sequenced on the Illumina HiSeq platform. Genomic DNA was also sequenced at NU-OMICS using PacBio technology for long-read sequencing. The polymerase binding reaction to

SMRTbell template was performed using the Sequel Binding kit 2.1 and sequenced using a PacBio Sequel instrument with a 10h movie capture time. Next, the BAM files of circular consensus sequencing reads were used for assembly in HGAP (v.4).

For strain KRD168^T, long reads were assembled using Flye [30] (v.2.8.1). Then, the short reads were mapped over the assembly using Bowtie2 [31] (v.2.4.2), and the produced BAM files were used for improving the genome using Pilon [32] (v.1.23) by correcting bases, fixing misassemblies and filling gaps. As a result, a complete genome sequence was obtained with 1150.6× genome coverage, comprising a chromosome sequence of 6273229 bp and a plasmid of 32760 bp, and with a G+C content of 73.44 mol%. For strain KRD185^T, a consensus assembly was created to reduce the number of contigs. To this end, long reads were first assembled using HGAP [33] (v.4), Flye (v.2.8.1), Canu [34] (v.2.1.1) and Raven [35] (v.1.2.2). Then, a consensus assembly was obtained with Flye using the 'subassemblies' mode. Finally, the consensus long-read assembly was integrated within Unicycler [36] (v.0.4.8), with SPAdes [37] (v.3.14.1) and Pilon (v.1.23) as dependencies, to create a hybrid assembly including short-read data. As a result of this strategy, an assembly made up of a chromosome of 6661555 bp, and presumably two plasmids of 99100 and 61150 bp, was obtained. The genome coverage for strain KRD185^T was 217.1×, and the G+C content was 73.98 mol%. Finally, the quality of both assemblies was evaluated using QUAST [38] (v.5.0.2), while their completeness was evaluated using BUSCO [39] (v.3.0.2) (Table S1).

To assess the genomic distance between strains KRD168^T and KRD185^T and other publicly available *Pseudonocardia* genomes (Table S2), digital DNA-DNA hybridization (dDDH) values were calculated with the Genome-to-Genome Distance Calculator (GGDC) [40] (v.2.1) using formula 2, while pairwise whole-genome average nucleotide identity (ANI) values were calculated using FastANI [41] (v.1.3). The calculated values (Fig. 2) showed that strain KRD168^T and *P. petroleophila* CGMCC 4.1532^T had a dDDH of 43.5% and an ANI of 91.8%, whilst strain KRD185^T and *P. broussonetiae* Gen01^T showed dDDH and ANI values of 51.7% and 93.7%, respectively. In both cases, the ANI values were below the recommended inter-species boundary value of 95% [41, 42]. Furthermore, the dDDH values also support the inter-species delimitation as they were below the threshold value of 70% [43]. Hence, despite the high sequence similarity (>99.5%) observed in the 16S rRNA gene between strain KRD168^T and *P. petroleophila* ATCC 15777^T, and between strain KRD185^T and *P. broussonetiae* Gen01^T, the whole-genome sequence relatedness indicated that strains KRD168^T and KRD185^T represent two novel species.

A genome-scale phylogenetic tree (Fig. 2) based on multi-locus sequence analysis was reconstructed using autoMLST [44]. The list of used protein-coding genes can be found in Table S3. This analysis confirmed the evolutionary relationship between strains KRD168^T and KRD185^T, *P. petroleophila* CGMCC 4.1532^T and *P. broussonetiae* Gen01^T. Moreover, it

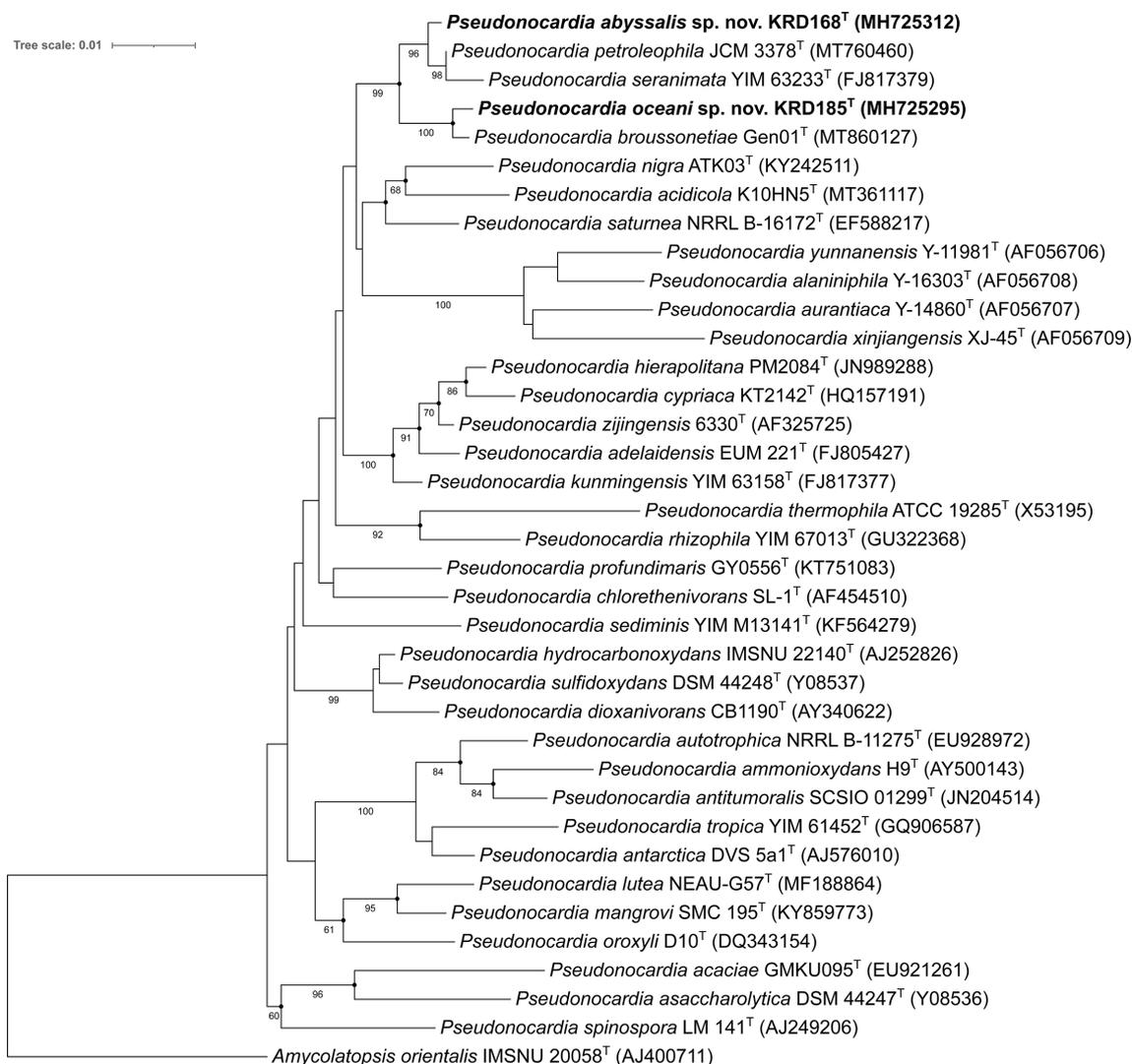


Fig. 1. Neighbour-joining phylogenetic tree based on 16S rRNA gene sequences showing the phylogenetic relationships of strains KRD168^T and KRD185^T and representative members of the genus *Pseudonocardia*. Dots on branches indicate those also recovered in the maximum-likelihood and maximum-parsimony trees. Bootstrap values of >50% are shown at branch points. *Amycolatopsis orientalis* IMSNU 20058^T was used as an outgroup. Bar, 0.01 substitutions per nucleotide position.

suggested a recent common ancestor between this monophyletic group and *Pseudonocardia thermophila* DMS 43832^T [1]. Interestingly, although the 16S rRNA gene phylogeny suggested a more distant relationship, the whole-genome analysis showed that *P. hydrocarbonoxydans* NBRC 14498^T [45] is closely related to strains KRD168^T and KRD185^T.

PHYSIOLOGY AND CHEMOTAXONOMY

The colony morphology of strains KRD168^T and KRD185^T, as well as *P. petroleophila* DSM 43193^T and *P. hydrocarbonoxydans* DSM 43281^T, was examined when cultured on ISP2, ISP3, ISP4 and ISP5 media [20] (Fig. S2). Salinity and pH tolerance analysis of the strains was carried out on modified ISP2 and ISP5 at pH 4–10 (Table S4) and with 0–20% (w/v) NaCl. The strains were able to grow on all tested media with

no diffusible pigments produced. Despite their marine origin, strains KRD168^T and KRD185^T did not display a particularly high halotolerance in comparison with their closest relatives as they both grew well at an NaCl concentration of 3%, which was 1% less than *P. petroleophila* DSM 43193^T and 1% more than *P. hydrocarbonoxydans* DSM 43281^T (Table 1). Moreover, salt was not a requirement for growth.

Analyses of fatty acids, metabolic activity, respiratory quinones, polar lipids and whole-cell sugars were carried out by the Identification Service of the Leibniz Institute DSMZ – German Collection of Microorganisms and Cell Cultures. For these analyses, strains were cultivated in GYM medium (28 °C for 8–14 days). Fatty acid analysis was performed using the Sherlock MIS (MIDI) system after conversion into fatty acid methyl esters [46, 47]. The fatty

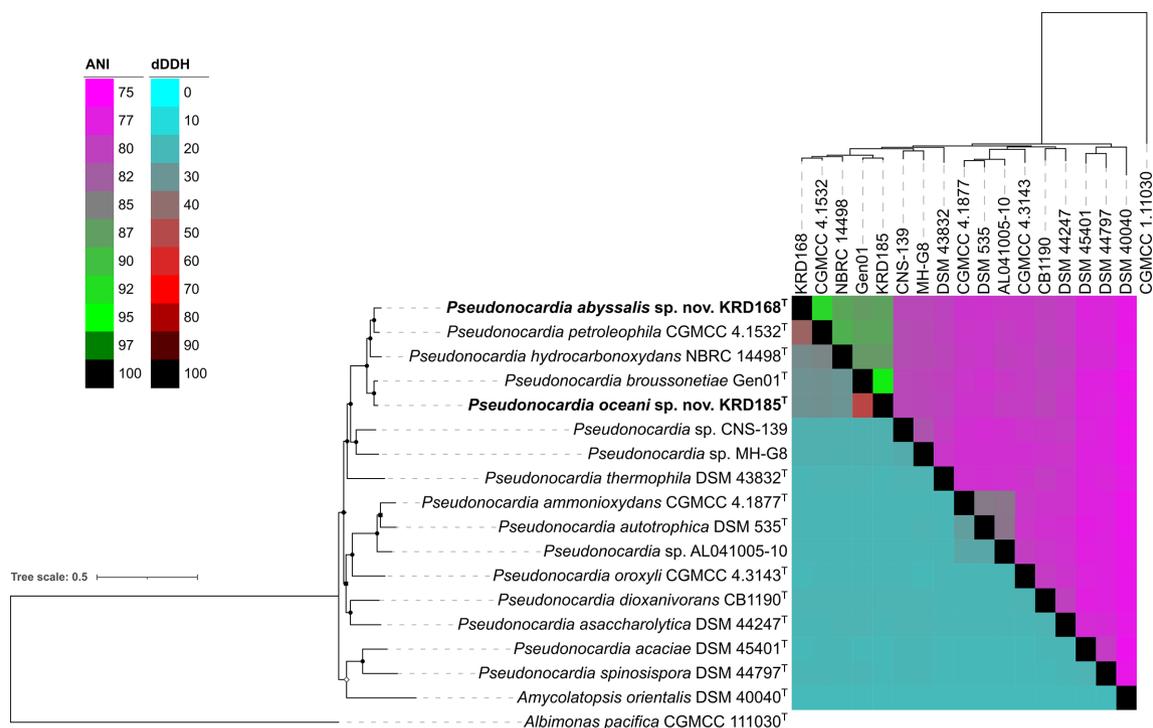


Fig. 2. Heatmap of the genomic distance between strains KRD168^T and KRD185^T and other *Pseudonocardia* strains, calculated as pairwise digital DNA–DNA hybridization (dDDH) (cyan, 0%; red, 70%) and average nucleotide identity (ANI) (magenta, 75%; green, 95%) values. The multi-locus tree based on 93 gene sequences extracted from the whole-genome sequence is shown. *Albimonas pacifica* CGMCC 111030^T was used as an outgroup. Bootstrap support is indicated as symbols in the branches (●=100, ◆=99, ■=98, ◇=95). Bar, 0.5 substitutions per nucleotide position.

acid annotations and quantification were made by the MIS Standard Software (Microbial ID) using the Aerobic Bacteria Library (TSBA6 v6.10). Metabolic activity was determined using the API 20E and API ZYM systems (bioMérieux). Polar lipids and respiratory quinones were extracted from freeze-dried cells cultured in YEME broth and analysed by chromatography [48]. Analysis of whole-cell sugars and detection of isomers of 2,6-diaminopimelic acid (Dpm) and 2,6-diamino-3-hydroxypimelic acid (OH-Dpm) were performed by TLC [49, 50].

The observed morphology of strains KRD168^T and KRD185^T, as well as the presence of *meso*-diaminopimelic acid in the cell-wall, MK-8(H₄) as the major menaquinone and *iso*-branched hexadecanoic acid as a predominant fatty acid, confirmed the typical physiology of a *Pseudonocardia* species for both strains. The polar lipid profile (Fig. S3) of both strains was characterized by the presence of phosphatidylethanolamine and diphosphatidylglycerol. In addition, two unidentified phospholipids and four unidentified glycolipids were detected in strain KRD168^T, whilst strain KRD185^T also contained four unidentified phospholipids, two unidentified glycolipids and an unidentified glycopospholipid. Moreover, some chemotaxonomic characteristics, such as the metabolic profile and the cellular fatty acid composition, differentiated strains KRD168^T and KRD185^T from *P. petroleophila* DSM 43193^T and *P. broussonetiae* Gen 01^T, respectively. In particular, strain KRD168^T

was negative for α -galactosidase and α -glucosidase activity, while *P. petroleophila* DSM 43193^T was positive. Similarly, strain KRD185^T was positive for α -glucosidase activity, while *P. broussonetiae* Gen 01^T reported no activity. Furthermore, the relatively low proportion of *iso*-branched pentadecanoic acid (11.0% vs 25.2%) and the relatively high proportion of *iso*-branched tetradecanoic acid (7.6% vs 2.0%) distinguished strain KRD168^T from *P. petroleophila* DSM 43193^T. Likewise, the relatively low proportion of *iso*-branched tetradecanoic acid (1.9 % vs 5.6 %) and hexadecanoic acid (3.6 % vs 9.8 %), as well as the relatively high proportion of *iso*-branched pentadecanoic acid (7.7 % vs 2.1 %) differentiated strain KRD185^T from *P. broussonetiae* Gen 01^T.

Strains KRD168^T, KRD185^T and *P. petroleophila* DSM 43193^T were cultured on ISP2 agar for 28 days using an inclined coverslip, and their morphology was observed using a Nikon Eclipse TE2000-S Inverted microscope fitted with a 100 \times /1.3 numerical aperture objective lens (Nikon). Illumination was sourced from a mercury arc lamp with appropriate emission filters for FITC/PI imaging. Fluorescence microscopy was carried out using fluorescein-conjugated wheat germ agglutinin (FITC-WGA) and propidium iodide (PI) to describe structures in the aerial hyphae and apical tip growth [51]. Phase-contrast and fluorescence images were acquired sequentially using an ORCA-100 CCD camera (Hamamatsu).

Table 1. Differential phenotypic characteristics of the analysed strains

Strains: 1, *Pseudonocardia abyssalis* sp. nov. KRD168^T; 2, *Pseudonocardia oceani* sp. nov. KRD185^T; 3, *Pseudonocardia petroleophila* DSM 43193^T (from Zhao et al. [53]); 4, *Pseudonocardia hydrocarbonoxydans* DSM 43281^T (from Zhang et al. [15]); 5, *Pseudonocardia broussonetiae* Gen 01^T (from Mo et al. [54]).

	1	2	3	4	5
Morphology on:					
ISP2	Yellow	Orange	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow
ISP5	White	Yellow	White	White	Yellow
Growth at:					
NaCl (%)	0–3	0–3	0–4	0–2	0–8
pH	6–10	6–10	6–10	6–9	5–8
API ZYM					
Alkaline phosphatase	+	+	+	+	–
Esterase (C4)	+	+	+	–	+
Cystine arylamidase	–	+	+	+	–
Trypsin	–	–	+	+	–
α-Chymotrypsin	–	–	+	+	–
Naphthol-AS-BI-phosphohydrolase	+	+	–	+	+
α-Galactosidase	–	–	+	+	–
β-Galactosidase	+	–	+	+	–
α-Glucosidase	–	+	+	+	–
Fatty acids (>1%)					
C _{12:0}	ND	ND	ND	ND	1.2
C _{14:0}	ND	ND	ND	ND	2.9
iso-C _{14:0}	7.6	1.9	2.0	1.5	5.6
C _{15:1} ω6c	ND	ND	ND	1.9	2.6
iso-C _{15:0}	11.0	7.7	25.2	17.9	2.1
iso-C _{16:1} H	3.2	8.9	2.6	5.8	10.7
iso-C _{16:0}	36.3	38.5	43.2	31.7	36.1
C _{16:1} 2-OH	ND	ND	2.4	ND	ND
C _{16:0}	4.7	3.6	2.0	3.6	9.8
iso-C _{17:0}	4.2	2.0	10.2	3.2	ND
anteiso-C _{17:0}	1.1	2.4	ND	1.4	ND
C _{17:1} ω8c	8.0	5.1	ND	8.3	4.0
C _{17:0}	3.4	1.6	ND	1.7	1.4
C _{17:0} 10 methyl	2.4	2.7	1.5	1.9	ND
C _{18:1} ω9c	1.2	ND	ND	ND	ND

ND, Not detected.

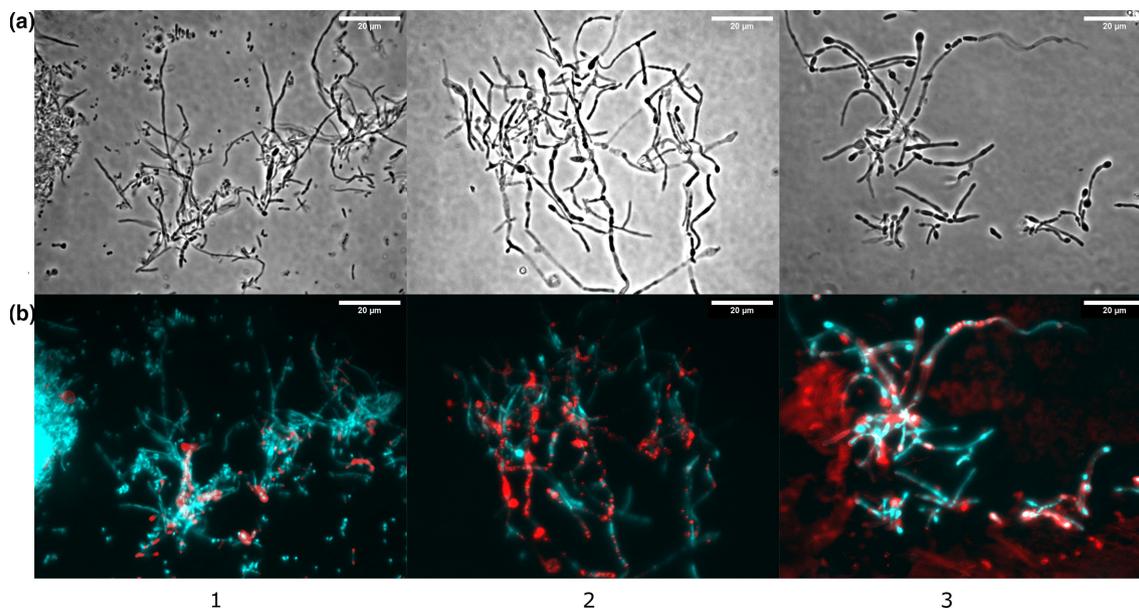


Fig. 3. (a) Phase contrast and (b) widefield epifluorescence microscopy of: 1, *Pseudonocardia abyssalis* sp. nov. KRD168^T; 2, *Pseudonocardia oceani* sp. nov. KRD185^T; and 3, *Pseudonocardia petroleophila* DSM 43193^T; growth on ISP2 for 28 days. Fluorescence microscopy of DNA (cyan) and nascent peptidoglycan (red) is shown. Bar, 20 µm.

Image processing and analysis was performed using FIJI [52]. Budding substrate and aerial hyphae with swelling and side branches were observed (Fig. 3). A more filamentous structure was observed for strain KRD185^T than for strain KRD168^T. Spores were rod-like, mostly 0.6–1.4 µm wide and 1.2–1.9 µm long for strain KRD168^T, and 0.7–1.6 µm wide and 1.4–3.9 µm long for strain KRD185^T. Active growth and sporulation were still observed after 28 days.

Based on the phenotypic and chemotaxonomic analysis, strains KRD168^T and KRD185^T exhibit characteristic markers for the genus *Pseudonocardia*. Furthermore, the phenotypic characterization and genomic relatedness of strains KRD168^T and KRD185^T differentiate them from their closest phylogenetic neighbours. In conclusion, we suggest that the two strains represent two novel species, for which the names *Pseudonocardia abyssalis* sp. nov. and *Pseudonocardia oceani* sp. nov. are proposed.

DESCRIPTION OF *PSEUDONOCARDIA ABYSSALIS* SP. NOV.

Pseudonocardia abyssalis (a.bys.sa'lis. L. fem. n. *abyssus* an abyss, deep sea; L. fem. suff. *-alis* suffix denoting pertaining to; N.L. fem. adj. *abyssalis* pertaining to the abyssal depths of the ocean).

Aerobic, Gram-positive, non-motile actinomycetes. Forms yellow aerial and substrate mycelia on ISP2, while white substrate and aerial mycelia are produced on ISP3, ISP4 and ISP5. Growth occurs at 20–30 °C, at pH 6–10 and in the presence of 0–3% (w/v) NaCl. Substrate mycelium is fragmented and rod-shaped spore chains are formed on aerial hyphae and

substrate mycelium. The following enzymatic reactions are positive: urease, acetoin production, gelatine hydrolysis, alkaline phosphatase, esterase, esterase lipase, leucine arylamidase and valine arylamidase. The major menaquinone is MK-8(H₄) (91.5%), while MK-8(H₆) (8.5%) is also present. The cell wall contains *meso*-diaminopimelic acid as the diagnostic amino acid, and the major whole-cell sugar is glucose with minor amounts of arabinose and xylose. The polar lipid profile includes phosphatidylethanolamine and diphosphatidylglycerol. The predominant fatty acid is iso-C_{16:0}, while iso-C_{15:0}, C_{17:1}ω8c and iso-C_{14:0} are also major components.

The type strain, KRD168^T (=DSM 111918^T =NCIMB 15270^T), was isolated from sediments collected from the Southern Ocean at a depth of 4539 m. The genome of the type strain is characterized by a size of 6.31 Mbp and a G+C content of 73.44 mol%.

DESCRIPTION OF *PSEUDONOCARDIA OCEANI* SP. NOV.

Pseudonocardia oceani (o.ce.ani. L. gen. n. *oceani* of the ocean).

Aerobic, Gram-positive, non-motile actinomycetes. Forms yellow substrate mycelium and orange aerial mycelium with white spores formed from the aerial hyphae on ISP2. On ISP3, ISP4 and ISP5 white substrate and aerial mycelia are produced. Growth occurs at 20–30 °C, at pH 6–10 and in the presence of 0–3% (w/v) NaCl. Substrate mycelium is fragmented and rod-shaped spore chains are formed on aerial hyphae and substrate mycelium. The following enzymatic reactions are positive: alkaline phosphatase, esterase,

esterase lipase, leucine arylamidase, valine arylamidase, cystine arylamidase, acid phosphatase, naphthol-AS-BI-phosphohydrolase, α -glucosidase and β -glucosidase. The major menaquinone is MK-8(H₄) (96.2%), while MK-8(H₂) (2.9%) and MK-8(H₆) (1.5%) are also present. The cell wall contains *meso*-diaminopimelic acid as the diagnostic amino acid, and the major whole-cell sugar is glucose with minor amounts of arabinose and xylose. The polar lipid profile includes phosphatidylethanolamine and diphosphatidylglycerol. The predominant fatty acid is iso-C_{16:0}, while iso-C_{16:1}H, iso-C_{15:0} and C_{17:1}ω8c are also major components.

The type strain, KRD185^T (=DSM 111919^T=NCIMB 15269^T), was isolated from sediments collected from the Southern Ocean at a depth of 4060 m. The genome of the type strain is characterized by a size of 6.82 Mbp and a G+C content of 73.98 mol%.

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Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest.

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