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EXPLORING THE ARTISTRY OF PENICILLIUM DIGITATUM

a chapter by

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Introduction to Penicillium sp.

The discovery of penicillin as an antimicrobial agent derived from Penicillium sp. by Alexander Fleming opens has resulted in the salvation of millions of lives. The unexpected discovery of 'mould juice' penicillin was found effective to combat the gram-negative bacteria as he mentioned:

"When I woke up just after dawn on September 28, 1928, I certainly didn't plan to revolutionise all medicine by discovering the world's first antibiotic, or bacteria killer. But I suppose that was exactly what I did" (Tan & Tatsumura, 2015).

This discovery has created the opportunities for the researcher to enhance the development of the antimicrobial agents derived from the fungus, and to date, Penicillium sp. is utilised in numerous biotechnological applications.

Penicillium digitatum, a species belonging to the genus Penicillium, is one of the pathogens that infects around 90% of citrus fruits, leading to crop losses (Yao et al., 2023). Despite the toxicity effect of the Penicillium digitatum, this fungus had many potentials in biotechnology and medicine research. This chapter presents the morphology of Penicillium digitatum. Moreover, a brief discussion on the biotechnological and medicinal applications of Penicillium digitatum will be briefly discussed at the end of this chapter.

Morphology and structure

Penicillium digitatum is a mesophilic fungus (grows best at moderate temperatures), with a temperature range from 6°C to 37°C with optimum growth at 24°C (Lin et al., 2020).

The images of *Penicillium digitatum* depicted in this article were taken at various magnifications that showcase intricate details, providing a visual

journey into the hidden world of this citrus green mold. Figure 1 shows the morphology of Penicillium digitatum that was grown in a potato dextrose agar plate. Penicillium digitatum is also known as green-mold as it produces a velvety, olive-coloured surrounded by a white mycelium.

Figure 2 further shows the microscopic image of Penicillium digitatum. Under light microscope, the arrangement of brush-like Penicillium digitatum could be observed. Penicillium digitatum demonstrates a filamentous vegetative growth pattern, with thin, septate hyphae. P. digitatum that reproduces asexually by producing asexual spores or conidia that arise from either aerial hyphae or network of hyphae (Lin et al., 2020). Conidiophore is able to divide into two (biverticillate) or three (terverticillate) branches. Metulae are located at the end of each rami. The conidia exist as a smooth and oval shaped (Lin et al., 2020).

The images of Penicillium digitatum were also captured using scanning electron microscope as shown in Figures 3 and 4. Figure 3 shows the growth of Penicillium digitatum in a colony. While focusing on the higher magnification as shown in Figure 4, the single Penicillium digitatum was captured and shows the similar image as described previously.



Figure 1: Penicillium digitatum on the potato dextrose

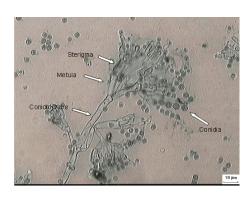


Figure 2: Penicillium digitatum on the potato dextrose agar under 400x magnification.

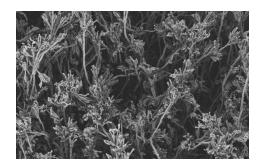


Figure 3: A colony of Penicillium digitatum viewed under scanning electron microscope with 310x magnification



Figure 4: Focused image of Penicillium digitatum under scanning electron microscope with 1000 x magnification.

Biotechnological and Medicinal Applications

Beyond its role as a pathogen, Penicillium digitatum is a rich source of enzymes with diverse applications in biotechnology which offers insights into novel biocatalysts and bioprocesses, sustainable practices in various industrial sectors (Onofre et al., 2016). The unique chemical compounds synthesized by Penicillium digitatum may be beneficial in combating fungal infection and, opening new potentials for drug discovery in the realm of infectious diseases (Tran et al., 2022).

Conclusion

In summary, from its ancient mentions in historical texts to its pivotal role in Alexander Fleming's ground-breaking work, Penicillium digitatum has evolved from a mere natural inhabitant to a symbol of scientific achievement and a life-saving medical tool. The pictures enhance our understanding of the intricate details that define the morphology and structure of Penicillium digitatum. Moreover, Penicillium digitatum emerges as a valuable resource in biotechnology and medicine which illustrates the dynamic interplay between the microscopic world of Penicillium sp. and the broader landscape of scientific, industrial, and medical advancements.

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