An ex-type culture cannot always tell the ultimate truth

This note is prompted by the case of the generic name Ochroconis, a rather common genus of saprotrophic soil hyphomycetes, some of which grow occasionally on humans and fish. Von Arx, in the 1970s, being mainly interested in producing keys to identify fungal genera in culture morphologically, did not believe that Scolecobasidium terreum E.V. Abbott 1927 with Y-shaped yellowish conidia, and other species of this genus with darker, unbranched conidia were congeneric, as proposed by Barron & Busch (1962).

Therefore, he let his young staff member G. Sybren de Hoog describe a separate genus, Ochroconis, for the latter, larger group (de Hoog & von Arx 1974). In addition to mycologists who regarded the similar colony morphology, did not believe that Protocrea Petch 1937 for this fungus and its relatives, while Overton et al.’s fungus is now known as Hypocreopsis decipiens Jaklitsch et al. 2008.

Sybren de Hoog, in order to retain the generic name Ochroconis, let his student K. Sameritak declare Scolecobasidium a dubious genus, because the identity of the type was uncertain to them (Sameritak et al. 2014), in spite of many reliably named cultures of S. terreum being available all over the world, which clearly define the identity of this characteristic fungus. One of these cultures discovered by Domsch et al. (1980) was the CBS 510.71 ex-type of Humicola minima Fassat. 1967, whose author had not seen the characteristic Y-shaped conidia that were formed on certain media by the original culture. Without mentioning the source of this information, Sameritak et al. (2014) made the combination Ochroconis minima (Fassatiova) Samer. & de Hoog 2014, which would have to replace Scolecobasidium terreum. Needless to say, Ochroconis has not been recognized by Seifert et al. (2011). In the era of production of lists of fungal names for protection, the responsible committee should not be misguided and recognize the incorrect name for this genus.

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