

Genome-Based Reclassification of *Anoxybacillus geothermalis* Filippidou et al. 2016 as a Later Heterotypic Synonym of *Anoxybacillus rupiensis* Derekova et al. 2007

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Abstract

In this study, our aim was to elucidate the relationship between *Anoxybacillus rupiensis* DSM 17127^T and *Anoxybacillus geothermalis* GSsed3^T through whole-genome phylogenetic analysis. The obtained 16S rRNA gene sequence from the genome of *A. rupiensis* DSM 17127^T exhibited a 99.8% similarity with *A. geothermalis* GSsed3^T. In the phylogenetic trees constructed using whole-genome sequences and 16S rRNA gene sequences, *A. rupiensis* DSM 17127^T and *A. geothermalis* GSsed3^T were observed to form a clade, indicating a close relationship between them. Moreover, the average amino acid identity, average nucleotide identity, and digital DNA–DNA hybridization values calculated between *A. rupiensis* DSM 17127^T and *A. geothermalis* GSsed3^T exceeded the threshold values typically used for species demarcation. Furthermore, the phylogenomic analysis based on the core genome of the strains in question provided additional support for the formation of a monophyletic clade by *A. rupiensis* DSM 17127^T and *A. geothermalis* GSsed3^T. Most phenotypic and chemotaxonomic features between both strains were almost identical except for a few exceptions. These findings suggest that both strains should be classified as belonging to the same species, and we propose that *A. geothermalis* GSsed3^T is a later heterotypic synonym of *A. rupiensis* DSM 17127^T.

Introduction

The genus *Anoxybacillus*, which belongs to the phylum *Firmicutes*, was initially proposed by Pikuta et al. in 2000 [1], with *Anoxybacillus pushchinoensis* as the type species. Its description was subsequently amended by Pikuta et al. in 2003 [2]. At the time of writing, there are 24 species within this genus with validly published names, along with three species that have not been validly published (http://www.bacterio.net). *Anoxybacillus* species are widely distributed and can be found in geothermally heated environments. The taxonomic classification of *Anoxybacillus* members has traditionally relied on 16S rRNA gene sequence analysis and DNA–DNA hybridization (DDH). However, it is known that

the discriminatory power of 16S rRNA gene analysis is often limited when it comes to distinguishing closely related species, such as those within the *Anoxybacillus* genus. DDH is a time-consuming and labor-intensive method, and the establishment of a central database is impractical. Recently, phylogenetic approaches utilizing whole-genome sequencebased metrics, such as average nucleotide identity (ANI), digital DDH (dDDH), and average amino acid identity (AAI), have emerged as important tools for the classification of prokaryotic taxa. These methods have been employed in the reclassification of various bacterial taxa [3, 4].

Anoxybacillus rupiensis DSM 17127^T was isolated from different springs in the area of Rupi basin by Derekova et al. in 2007 [5] and its validation was documented in the International Journal of Systematic and Evolutionary Microbiology (Validation List No. 119) [6]. Anoxybacillus geothermalis GSsed3^T was isolated from deposits at the entrance filters of the geothermal research facility of Groß Schönebeck in northern Germany by Filippidou et al. in 2016 [7], as validly named species. In the original article, Filippidou et al. [7] proposed *A. geothermalis* GSsed3^T as a new species within the genus Anoxybacillus, primarily based on the DNA–DNA hybridization (DDH) value between *A. rupiensis* DSM

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17127^T and A. geothermalis GSsed3^T and based on genomic average nucleotide identity (ANI) value and pairwise digital DNA-DNA hybridization (dDDH) values between A. *amylolyticus* $MR3C^{T}$ and *A. geothermalis* $GSsed3^{T}$. Due to the unavailability of the genome sequence of A. rupiensis DSM 17127^T in any database, Filippidou et al. [7] were unable to determine the average nucleotide identity (ANI) value and pairwise digital DNA-DNA hybridization values between A. rupiensis DSM 17127^T and A. geothermalis GSsed3^T. During our genome-based analysis, we observed that A. rupiensis DSM 17127^T and A. geothermalis GSsed3^T shared similar features. As a result, we attempted to clarify the relationship between A. rupiensis DSM 17127^T and A. geothermalis GSsed3^T using genomics-based methods. The data presented in this study provide evidence that A. geothermalis $GSsed3^T$ is a later heterotypic synonym of A. rupiensis DSM 17127^T.

Materials and Methods

A. rupiensis DSM 17127^{T} and A. geothermalis GSsed 3^{T} were obtained from the German Collection of Microorganisms and Cell Cultures GmbH (DSMZ). Two type strains were cultivated on Nutrient Agar medium and incubated at a temperature of 55 °C for a duration of 24 h. In this study, the genome sequence of A. rupiensis DSM 17127^{T} was determined, while the genome sequence of A. geothermalis GSsed3^T (JYCG0000000) was downloaded from the GenBank database. For the complete genome sequencing, genomic DNA was isolated from A. geothermalis GSsed3^T culture using the QIAamp DNA Mini Kit according to the manufacturer's instructions. The whole-genome sequencing of A. geothermalis GSsed3^T was performed using 2×250 bp paired-end reads on an Illumina HiSeq 2500 platform by MicrobesNG (University of Birmingham, United Kingdom). The reads were assembled using the complete SPAdes assembly strategy on the PATRIC web server (https:// patricbrc.org/) [8]. Genome annotation was performed using Rapid Annotations using Subsystems Technology (RAST) server [9]. The draft genome sequences obtained in this study have been submitted to the National Center for Biotechnology Information (NCBI) database and can be accessed under the accession number JAQOTG010000000.

The pairwise alignment feature implemented on the EZBioCloud server (https://www.ezbiocloud.net/tools/pairA lign) was used to compare the 16S rRNA gene sequence identity between *A. rupiensis* DSM 17127^T and *A. geothermalis* GSsed3^T. The 16S rRNA gene sequences of closely related type strains were obtained from the EzBioCloud server at https://www.ezbiocloud.net/ [10] and subsequently edited using the BioEdit software [11]. The ClustalW program [12] was employed for multiple sequence alignment of

the 16S rRNA gene sequences. The Kimura's two-parameter model [13] was employed to calculate the evolutionary distances. The phylogenetic trees were constructed using Mega-X software, employing the neighbor-joining method [14], maximum-parsimony method (Kluge and Farris, 1969), and maximum-likelihood method [15]. The bootstrap values were determined based on 1000 replications to assess the robustness of the tree topologies.

The phylogenetic analysis of A. rupiensis DSM 17127^T and A. geothermalis GSsed3^T was conducted using the type strain genomes server pipeline (TYGS) developed by Meier-Kolthoff and Göker [16]. The digital DNA-DNA hybridization (dDDH) value between the draft genome sequences of A. rupiensis DSM 17127^T and A. geothermalis GSsed3^T was calculated using Formula 2 of the online Genome-to-Genome Distance Calculator (GGDC) tool provided at http:// ggdc.dsmz.de/distcalc2.php, as proposed by Meier-Kolthoff et al. [17]. To assess the genetic relationship between A. rupiensis DSM 17127^T and A. geothermalis GSsed3^T, average nucleotide identity (ANI) values were determined using the orthoANIu algorithm and an online ANI calculator available at www.ezbiocloud.net/tools/ani, as described by Lee et al. [18] and Yoon et al. [19]. A phylogenetic tree based on whole-genome sequences was constructed using the TYGS web server developed by Meier-Kolthoff and Göker [16]. The amino acid identity (AAI) value was calculated using the CompareM software (https://github.com/dparks1134/ CompareM).

For the phylogenetic and pangenome analyses, the genomes of *A. rupiensis* DSM 17127^{T} and *A. geothermalis* GSsed3^T and all other *Anoxybacillus* species registered in RefSeq were re-annotated using Prokka 1.14.5 with default settings to ensure consistent annotation [20]. Phylogenetic trees were constructed using the 'insert genome into species tree app' version 2.2.0, which utilizes the FastTree 2 algorithm developed by Price et al. [21]. The pangenome was constructed using the 'build pangenome with OrthoMCL app' version 2.0, available on the KBase platform (https://www.kbase.us/), as described by Arkin et al. [22]. Pangenome-based phylogenomic analysis was performed using the 'phylogenetic pangenome accumulation app' version 1.4.0 developed by Li et al. [23] and Arkin et al. [22].

The assessment of *A. rupiensis* DSM 17127^T and *A. geothermalis* GSsed3^T's biochemical characteristics was conducted using the API 20E, API 50CH strips, and the Vitek2 Bacilli Identification Card (BCL) microtest systems from bioMérieux, adhering to the instructions provided by the manufacturer. The polar lipids of strain *A. salavatliensis* DSM 22626^T and *A. gonensis* G2^T were extracted from 100-mg freeze-dried cells using two-dimensional thin-layer chromatography (TLC) according to the method of Tindall [24, 25]. Two-dimensional TLC on silica gel facilitated the separation of polar lipids. The initial phase involved the

use of chloroform:methanol:water (65:25:4, v/v), while the subsequent phase utilized chloroform:methanol:acetic acid:water (80:12:15:4, v/v). For the detection process, 5% ethanolic molybdophosphoric acid was employed for total lipids, molybdenum blue for phospholipids, ninhydrin for aminolipids, and α -naphthol for glycolipids, as per the methodology outlined by Tindall et al. [26]. Reference standards included diphosphatidylglycerol (DPG), phosphatidic acid (PA), phosphatidylglycerol (PG), phosphatidylethanolamine (PE), phosphatidylcholine (PC), phosphatidylserine (PS), and phosphatidylinositol (PI). Extracting and purifying isoprenoid quinones from freeze-dried cells involved adhering to Collins' procedure [27] and subjected the samples to analysis using high-performance liquid chromatography (HPLC).

Results and Discussion

Whole-genome sequencing has greatly contributed to resolving the taxonomic inconsistencies within prokaryotic taxa, leading to the reclassification of several bacterial species [28]. In this study, we conducted a comprehensive reassessment of the taxonomic relationship between *A. rupiensis* DSM 17127^T and *A. geothermalis* GSsed3^T by employing whole-genome phylogenetic analysis. *A. geothermalis* GSsed3^T was isolated from deposits at the entrance filters of the geothermal research facility of Groß Schönebeck in northern Germany, while *A. rupiensis* DSM 17127^T was isolated from different springs in the area of Rupi basin.

In their original study, Filippidou et al. [7] reported that A. geothermalis GSsed3^T exhibited a 16S rRNA gene sequence similarity of 99.8% with A. rupiensis DSM 17127^T. However, despite this high similarity, they reported that the DNA-DNA hybridization value between A. rupiensis DSM 17127^T and A. geothermalis GSsed3^T was determined to be 16%, which is below the species delineation threshold (70%)as defined by Wayne et al. [29]. In this study, we conducted a comprehensive analysis to assess the phylogenetic relationship between A. rupiensis DSM 17127^T and A. geotherma*lis* GSsed3^T, focusing on various genomic parameters. The pairwise nucleotide sequence alignment of their 16S rRNA gene sequences revealed a high similarity of 99.8%, with three nucleotide mismatches. Furthermore, phylogenetic tree reconstructions based on the 16S rRNA gene sequences consistently clustered A. rupiensis DSM 17127^T and A. geothermalis GSsed3^T together in the neighbor-joining algorithm, showing robust clustering with a high bootstrap resampling value of 96% (Fig. 1). Similar results were obtained when employing the maximum-likelihood and maximum-parsimony algorithms (Figs. S1, S2), further supporting their close phylogenetic relationship.

In the phylogenomic tree (Fig. 2), A. rupiensis DSM 17127^T and A. geothermalis GSsed3^T formed a distinct and well-supported branch separate from other type strains within the same genus, with a high bootstrap resampling value of 100%. The average nucleotide identity (ANI) value between A. rupiensis DSM 17127^T and A. geothermalis GSsed3^T was determined to be 98.60%, surpassing the suggested threshold value (95-96%) for species demarcation [30]. This finding confirms their high phylogenetic relatedness at the genomic level. Moreover, the average amino acid identity (AAI) value between A. rupiensis DSM 17127^T and A. geothermalis GSsed3^T was calculated as 98.50%, significantly exceeding the recommended cut-off for species delineation (AAI>95%) [31], further supporting their classification within the same species. Furthermore, digital DNA-DNA hybridization (dDDH) analyses yielded a dDDH value of 85.6% between A. rupiensis DSM 17127^T and A. geothermalis GSsed3^T, surpassing the established cut-off (70%) for assigning bacterial strains to the same species [29]. These results reinforce the notion that A. geothermalis GSsed3^T and A. rupiensis DSM 17127^T should be considered members of the same species. Table 1 presents the AAI, ANI, and dDDH values calculated between A. rupiensis DSM 17127^T, A. geothermalis GSsed3^T, and other closely related type strains.

The pangenomic analysis of *Anoxybacillus* species, including *A. rupiensis* DSM 17127^T and *A. geothermalis* GSsed3^T, resulted in the identification of 9726 orthologous clusters that constituted the pangenome. The numbers of core genes, strain-specific genes (singleton), and accessory genes (partial) were 128, 5062, and 4536, respectively. According to the pangenome-based phylogenomic analysis, *A. rupiensis* DSM 17127^T and *A. geothermalis* GSsed3^T formed a monophyletic clade and shared 2421 core genes, indicating their close evolutionary relationship (Fig. 3).

Furthermore, the validation of this conclusion has been established through a comparison of phenotypic and chemotaxonomic characteristics between A. rupiensis DSM 17127^T and A. geothermalis GSsed3^T. In the API 20E, API 50CH, and Vitek2 BCL system, A. rupiensis DSM 17127^{T} and A. geothermalis GSsed3^T exhibited similar biochemical features with minor exceptions (Table 2). As an illustration, acid production from D-galactose, sucrose, and arginine dihydrolase were negative for A. rupiensis DSM 17127^T, whereas A. geothermalis GSsed3^T showed positive results. On the other hand, urease, ornithine decarboxylase, tryptophanase, and acid production from D-trehalose and D-mannose were positive for A. rupiensis DSM 17127^{T} , whereas A. geothermalis GSsed3^T yielded negative results. Both species exhibited positive results for lysine decarboxylase, tyrosine arylamidase, citrate utilization, catalase, phenylalanine arylamidase, Ala-Phe-Pro-Arylamidase, α -glucosidase acid



Fig. 1 Neighbor-joining (NJ) tree constructed based on 16S rRNA gene sequences available from the GenBank database. Bootstrap values (expressed as percentages of 1000 replications) greater than 50%

are shown at branch points. Bar, 0.01 represents substitutions per nucleotide position. *Paenibacillus polymyxa* DSM 36^{T} was used as the outgroup

production from D-xylose, D-mannitol, D-glucose, D-fructose, D-ribose, D-maltose, glycerol, esculin ferric citrate, D-saccharose, and starch. Also, *A. rupiensis* DSM 17127^T and *A. geothermalis* GSsed3^T exhibited negative results for nitrate reduction, leucine-arylamidase, tryptophan deaminase, glycine arylamidase, gelatin hydrolysis, Voges–Proskauer, β -galactosidase, polymyxin B resistance, L-proline arylamidase, β -N-acetyl-glucosaminidase, hydrogen sulfide production, L-lysine arylamidase, alanine arylamidase, pyruvate, β -xylosidase, L-aspartate arylamidase, L-pyrrolydonyl arylamidase, phosphoryl choline, cyclodextrine, methyl-D-xyloside, α -mannosidase, N-acetyl-glucosamine, kanamycin resistance, β -mannosidase, methyl-a-D-glucopyranoside, salicin, D-cellobiose, D-trehalose, inulin, D-melezitose, glycogen, D-turanose, growth in 6.5% NaCI, oleandomycin resistance, acid production from L-arabinose, D-sorbitol, D-melibiose, L-xylose, D-raffinose, D-tagatose, D-arabitol, arbutin, inositol, L-rhamnose, putrescine, erythritol, D-arabinose, methyl-D-xylopyranoside, L-sorbose, dulcitol, amygdalin, D-lactose, xylitol, gentiobiose, D-lyxose, D-fucose, L-fucose, L-arabitol, potassium gluconate, potassium 2-ketogluconate, and potassium 5-ketogluconate. The total count of phenotypic tests conducted utilizing the API 20E, API 50CH, and Vitek2 BCL system amounted to 91.



Fig. 2 Phylogenetic tree based on whole-genome sequences of *A. rupiensis* DSM 17127^T and *A. geothermalis* GSsed3^T and related reference strains. The tree was inferred with FastME 2.1.6.1 [33] from genome blast distance phylogeny (GBDP) distances calculated from genome sequences using the TYGS server (https://tygs.dsmz.de) [16].

The branch lengths are scaled in terms of GBDP distance formula d5. The numbers at branches are GBDP pseudo-bootstrap support values $\geq 64\%$ from 100 replications with an average branch support of 97.7%. The tree was rooted at the midpoint [34] (Color figure online)

	A. rupiensis DSM 17127 ^T			A. geothermalis GSsed3 ^T		
	AAI	ANI	dDDH	AAI	ANI	dDDH
A. rupiensis DSM 17127 ^T (JAQOTG010000000)	_	_	_	98.5	98.60	85.60
A. geothermalis GSsed3 ^T (JYCG00000000)	98.5	98.60	85.60	-	-	-
A. tepidimanas DSM 16325 ^T (JACHEP000000000.1)	82.5	79.11	22.00	81.8	78.95	21.90
A. amylolyticus DSM 15939 ^T (NZ_CP015438)	80.2	77.56	20.70	79.9	77.62	20.80
A. voinovskiensis JCM 12111 ^T (BMNP00000000.1)	80.4	77.88	20.70	79.6	77.91	20.90
A. caldiproteolyticus DSM 15730 ^T (NZ_CP064060)	79.8	77.53	20.50	79.6	77.65	20.40

Table 1AAI, ANI and dDDHvalues between A. rupiensisDSM 17127^T, A. geothermalisGSsed3^T, and closely relatedtype strains



Fig. 3 Pangenome-based phylogenomic analysis of *Anoxybacillus* species. Orthologous gene sets within a pangenome are partitioned into three categories: core (blue), singleton (red), and partial pange-

nome (pink). Pangenome-based phylogenomic analysis was created by the OrthoMCL and phylogenetic pangenome accumulation (v1.4.0) app (Color figure online)

It was determined that there was a difference between *A*. *rupiensis* DSM 17127^{T} and *A*. *geothermalis* GSsed 3^{T} in only 8 tests and the difference value was 9%.

In the original article, Derekova et al. [5] were not determined the polar lipids of *A. rupiensis* DSM 17127^T. In the present study, the polar lipids found in *A. rupiensis* DSM 17127^T were diphosphatidylglycerol (DPG), phosphatidylglycerol (PG), phosphatidylethanolamine (PE), unidentified amino phospholipid (APL), unidentified phospholipid-1 (PL1), unidentified phospholipid-2 (PL2), unidentified lipid-1 (L1), unidentified lipid-2 (L2), and unidentified lipid-3 (L3), whereas *A. geothermalis* GSsed3^T consisted of DPG, PG, PE, APL, PL1, L1, and L3. Polar lipid composition showed very similar profile between two species (Fig. 4). The respiratory quinone of *A. rupiensis* DSM 17127^T and *A. geothermalis* GSsed3^T was menaquinone MK-7. Most of the chemotaxonomic and phenotypic features between *A. rupiensis* DSM 17127^T and *A. geothermalis* GSsed3^T were almost identical except for a few exceptions as is shown in Table 2 and Fig. 4. The disagreement for phenotypic and chemotaxonomic was probably due to their different ecological niches.

Collectively, the findings of this study indicate that *A. rupiensis* DSM 17127^T and *A. geothermalis* GSsed3^T should be regarded as the same species. Therefore, based on the phylogenetic analysis using whole-genome sequences and following rule 42 of the Bacteriological Code [32], we propose that *A. geothermalis* GSsed3^T, originally described by Filippidou et al. in 2016 [7], be reclassified as a later heterotypic synonym of *A. rupiensis* DSM 17127^T, as initially described by Derekova et al. in 2007. The type strain for *A. rupiensis* is DSM 17127^T (=R270^T=NBIMCC 8387^T), and GSsed3 (=CCOS808=ATCC BAA2555) represents an additional strain of *A. rupiensis*.

Table 2	The biochemical	characteristics	of A .	geothermalis	GSsed3 ^T
and A. r	upiensis DSM 17	127 ^T			

	A. geothermalis GSsed3 ^T	A. rupien- sis DSM 17127 ^T
Arginine dihydrolase	+	_
Urease	_	+
Ornithine decarboxylase	_	+
Tryptophanase	_	+
Tyrosine arylamidase	+	+
Lysine decarboxylase	+	+
Polymycin B resistance	-	_
β-galactosidase	-	_
L-proline arylamidase	-	-
β-N-acetyl-glucosaminidase	-	_
Hydrogen sulfide production	-	_
Gelatin hydrolysis	-	-
Leucine-arylamidase	-	_
Tryptophan deaminase	-	-
Glycine arylamidase	-	-
Acid production from:		
Sucrose	+	-
D-galactose	+	-
D-trehalose	-	+
D-mannose	_	+
D-xylose	+	+
L-arabinose	+	+
D-glucose	+	+
D-maltose	+	+
D-fructose	+	+
D-mannitol	+	+
D-ribose	+	+
L-arabinose	_	_
D-sorbitol	_	-
D-melibiose	_	-
L-xylose	_	-
D-raffinose	_	-
D-tagatose	_	-
D-arabitol	_	-
Arbutin	-	-

+ positive, - negative

Emended Species Description of *Anoxybacillus rupiensis* Derekova et al. 2007

Anoxybacillus rupiensis (N.L. masc. adj. rupiensis, originating from Rupi Basin, referring to the place of isolation of the type strain).

The description is the same as given by Derekova et al. (2007) with the following modification.

The respiratory quinone is menaquinone MK-7. Major polar lipids include diphosphatidylglycerol (DPG),



Fig. 4 Two-dimensional thin-layer chromatogram of polar lipids of **A** *A. rupiensis* DSM 17127^T and **B** *A. geothermalis* GSsed3^T. *DPG* diphosphatidylglycerol, *PG* phosphatidylglycerol, *PE* phosphatidylethanolamine, *APL* unidentified aminophospolipid, *PL* unidentified phospholipid, *L* unidentified lipid (Color figure online)

phosphatidylglycerol (PG), phosphatidylethanolamine (PE), unidentified amino phospholipid (APL), unidentified phospholipid-1 (PL1), unidentified phospholipid-2 (PL2), unidentified lipid-1 (L1), unidentified lipid-2 (L2), and unidentified lipid-3 (L3). In API 50CH, API 20E, and Vitek2 BCL system, the following activities were positive for lysine decarboxylase, tyrosine arylamidase, citrate utilization, catalase, phenylalanine arylamidase, Ala-Phe-Pro-Arylamidase, and acid production from D-trehalose,

D-mannose, D-xylose, D-mannitol, D-glucose, D-fructose, D-ribose, D-maltose, glycerol, esculin ferric citrate, D-saccharose, and starch. Negative for nitrate reduction, leucine arylamidase, tryptophan deaminase, glycine arylamidase, gelatin hydrolysis, Voges-Proskauer, β-galactosidase, polymyxin B resistance, L-proline arylamidase, β -N-acetylglucosaminidase, hydrogen sulfide production, L-lysine arylamidase, alanine arylamidase, pyruvate, β -xylosidase, L-aspartate arylamidase, L-pyrrolydonyl arylamidase, phosphoryl choline, cyclodextrine, methyl-D-xyloside, α -mannosidase, N-acetyl-glucosamine, kanamycin resistance, β -mannosidase, methyl-a-D-glucopyranoside, salicin, D-cellobiose, D-trehalose, inulin, D-melezitose, glycogen, D-turanose, growth in 6.5% NaCI, oleandomycin resistance, acid production from L-arabinose, D-sorbitol, D-melibiose, L-xylose, D-raffinose, D-tagatose, D-arabitol, arbutin, inositol, L-rhamnose, putrescine, erythritol, D-arabinose, methyl-D-xylopyranoside, L-sorbose, dulcitol, amygdalin, D-lactose, xylitol, gentiobiose, D-lyxose, D-fucose, L-fucose, L-arabitol, potassium gluconate, potassium 2-ketogluconate, and potassium 5-ketogluconate. The DNA G+C content of the type strain 17127^{T} (= R270^T = NBIMCC 8387^T) is 42.27 mol% (genome-based).

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Author Contributions KIB designed the study. KIB, AOB, and SC performed genome analysis. KIB, HIB, and AN analyzed the data and wrote the manuscript. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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Declarations

Conflict of interest The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

Ethical Approval This article does not contain any studies with human participants or animals performed by any of the authors.

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