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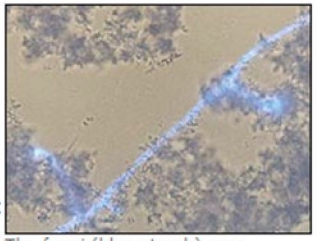
Ancient fungus 'revived' in lab

Fungus from a deep-sea sediment core that is hundreds of thousands of years old can grow when placed in culture, scientists have discovered.



The fungi (blue streak) were isolated from deep sea sediments

Indian researchers say the fungi come from sediments that are between 180,000 and 430,000 years old.

The finding adds to growing evidence for the impressive survival capabilities of many microorganisms.

They are the oldest known fungi that will grow on a nutrient medium, the scientists say in Deep Sea Research I.

The core was drilled from a depth of 5,904m in the Indian Ocean's Chagos Trench.

Like other ocean trenches, i
arc and is one of the deepe

On board their research ves
and colleagues from the Nat
Goa, India, and the Indian I
Hyderabad carefully deposit
into plastic bags which they
contamination with present-

The scientists then attempt
from the middle of the 5cm-
region had not been in cont
the core - and therefore an

Diluted malt extract agar was used as a nutrient medium to grow the fungus on. The team was able to culture fungi from six out of 22 subsections of the core.

At core depths of between 15 and 50cm, the scientists found fungus of a type that does not produce spores.

At a depth of 160cm (corresponding to an age of 180,000 years ago) they found high densities of a type of spore-producing fungus known as *Aspergillus sydowii*.

Considerable densities of this fungus were also found at depths of 280-370cm, corresponding to an age between 180,000 and 430,000 years ago.

The researchers think the microbes may be blown off the land into the sea. They then sink to the sea floor and are covered in deep-sea ocean sediments.

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Aspergillus Website
www.aspergillus.org.uk

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