Taxonomic Note

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Proposal to modify Rule 8 of the *Bacteriological Code* (1990 Revision)

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The wording of Rule 8 of the *Bacteriological Code* (1990 Revision) contradicts Principle 4 and it is proposed that the International Committee on Systematics of Prokaryotes (ICSP) modifies this rule.

Names of taxa above the rank of order are covered by Rule 8 of the *Bacteriological Code* (1990 Revision) (Lapage *et al.*, 1992). Taxonomic categories above the rank of class are not regulated by the Rules and, for all practical purposes, Rule 8 applies to names of classes and subclasses.

Rule 8 states: 'The name of each taxon above the rank of order is a Latin or latinized word preferably in conformity with Recommendation 6. It is based by choice on a combination of characters of the taxon or from a single character of outstanding importance'.

The last sentence of Rule 8 contradicts Principle 4 which states: 'The primary purpose of giving a name to a taxon is to supply a means of referring to it rather than to indicate the characters or the history of the taxon'. According to General Consideration 6, the Principles form the basis of the Code, and the Rules are designed to make effective the Principles. Consequently, a Rule should not contradict a Principle.

Moreover, Rule 8 does not specify the gender (masculine, feminine or neuter) and the number (singular or plural) of the names, and it does not specify that names are written with an initial capital letter. This is in contrast to Rules 7 and 10a, which cover these points for the names of taxa from the rank of genus up to and including order.

Gibbons and Murray (1978) and Stackebrandt *et al.* (1997) proposed the suffix *-ia* to denote a class. Stackebrandt *et al.* (1997) also proposed the suffix *-idae* for subclasses. The use of such suffixes provides a simple way to name classes and subclasses.

According to Rule 1b, it is suggested that the International Committee on Systematics of Prokaryotes (ICSP) alters either the wording of Principle 4 or Rule 8 so that they are no

longer in conflict, and that Rule 8 also clarify the ways in which the names of classes and subclasses are written and formed. I propose changing the wording of Rule 8 as follows.

The name of each taxon (covered by the Code) above the rank of order is a Latin or latinized word.

The name of a class is in the neuter gender, the plural number, and written with an initial capital letter. The name is formed by the addition of the suffix *-ia* to the stem of the name of the type genus of the type order of the class.

The name of a subclass is in the feminine gender, the plural number, and written with an initial capital letter. The name is formed by the addition of the suffix *-idae* to the stem of the name of the type genus of the type order of the subclass.

This new Rule is not retroactive.

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