

Coralline white band syndrome, a coralline algal affliction in the tropical Atlantic

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Reports of pathogens affecting reef-building coralline red algae are most widely known from the tropical Pacific Ocean. Littler and Littler (1994, 1995, 1998) reported the presence of two disease conditions, coralline lethal orange disease (CLOD), and an undescribed fungal pathogen on the coralline alga *Porolithon onkoides*. Presence of a coralline algal syndrome characterized by a white band front has recently been recognized in several localities in the Caribbean (Weil 2004). Our observations indicate that this condition is common on *Neogoniolithon accretum* at 17 to 20 m in southwestern Puerto Rico. A preliminary survey in one deep-reef locality indicated that approximately 70% of the *N. accretum* colonies were infected and some of these colonies were nearly 80% dead. The condition bears a superficial appearance to coral white band disease and is hence referred to as coralline white band syndrome. Affected *N. accretum* show a well-defined white band over algal tissue

that occurs as an expanding front, which leaves behind the non-pigmented remains of the alga. The dead algal tissue initially appears white and becomes greenish, presumably as it becomes colonized by endophytic green algae. Pictured is *N. accretum* growing on a colony of *Porites astreoides* which has two advancing fronts of the affliction (Fig. 1). The disease front in contact with presumably healthy *Porites* tissue suggests that the pathogen does not affect this coral species (but see Weil 2004). Further research on this condition is in progress.

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