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News

Vero cytotoxin-producing *E. coli* O157 infection in travellers returning from Turkey

Vero cytotoxin-producing *E. coli* O157 infection in travellers returning from Turkey

A cluster of cases of infection with Vero cytotoxin-producing *E. coli* O157 (VTEC O157) has been identified in tourists returning to Scotland from south west Turkey. Since 25 July 2005, Health Protection Scotland has become aware of ten confirmed and five suspected cases of *E. coli* O157 infection. Eight cases have been confirmed as phage type 8, of which seven were PT8 with genes for Verocytotoxins VT1 and VT2.

Seven of the 15 stayed in the resorts of Marmaris, Icmeler, or Turunc, in south west Turkey, which are within 10 km of each other. Three cases stayed in Perili, which is 40 km distant, but also went on a sailing cruise, two cases stayed in Dalaman, two stayed in Alanya, and one stayed in Gumbet. Onset dates for the cases range from 15 July to 4 August. No links between the cases have yet been identified apart from being in south west Turkey in July. Investigations are now underway in Scotland and in the rest of the United Kingdom (UK) to more precisely determine the causes of all the cases.

The Turkish public health authorities and United Kingdom tour operators have been alerted. Enter-net <http://www.hpa.org.uk/hpa/inter/enter-net_menu.htm> participants across Europe have been alerted to these cases, and a message was sent to health ministries and national public health authorities across the European Union through the Early Warning and Response System. Enter-net is the international surveillance network for human gastrointestinal infections. The network involves all 25 countries of the European Union (EU), and Australia, Canada, Japan, South Africa, Switzerland, and Norway. The network conducts international surveillance of salmonellosis and Vero cytotoxin-producing *Escherichia coli* (VTEC) O157, including antimicrobial resistance. To date, there have been no confirmed cases notified through the Enter-net system, but from the large number of people who holiday in south west Turkey, further cases are expected.

Between 19 July and 5 August the Health Protection Agency Laboratory of Enteric Pathogens (LEP) reported on five isolates of *E. coli* O157 from patients in England and Wales with a history of recent travel to Turkey (precise destination as yet unknown). Of these, three were PT8, VT1 and VT2, one PT14, and one PT1. Between 1995 and 2003, 32% of the 236 strains of VTEC O157 PT8 associated with foreign travel were from visitors returning from Turkey.

Members of the public planning to travel abroad can obtain information on how best to protect themselves from food and water borne gastrointestinal illness from the following sources: Fit for Travel (Health Protection Scotland) <<http://www.fitfortravel.scot.nhs.uk/>>, and The National Travel Health Network and Centre (NaTHNaC): <<http://www.nathnac.org/travel/factsheets/food.htm>>.

As usual, suspected cases of Vero cytotoxin-producing *E. coli* O157 reported to the Health Protection Agency Laboratory of Enteric Pathogens, Centre for Infections, 61 Colindale Avenue, London, NW9 5HT (tel: 020 8200 4400 ext:6114).

Diary

📅 Fighting infection - Challenges and recent advancements in microbiology

Fighting infection - Challenges and recent advancements in microbiology

Between 27 and 30 September 2005, the symposium *Fighting infection - Challenges and recent advancements in microbiology will be held*. The event will take place at the Radisson SAS Royal Hotel, Bergen, Norway, and is jointly hosted by the Society for General Microbiology (UK), the Society for Medical Microbiology (Norway), the Society for General Microbiology (Norway), and the Society for Virology (Norway).

Programme:

The symposium will address four main topics in the field of microbiology and infection:

- **New and re-emerging infections**
- **Antimicrobial resistance and new strategies for the development of novel compounds**
- **Marine microbiology: fish diseases and their prevention**
- **Microbiology education workshop: dead or alive?**

The symposium will reflect aspects of medical and veterinary microbiology of importance today. It will cover new and re-emerging infections of man and animals, including current status reports on influenza, tuberculosis, TSEs, meningococcal and enteric diseases and new and exotic viruses. Keynote presentations will feature recent research findings in epidemiology, diagnostics and vaccine development. International experts will also address the crisis in public health concerning antimicrobial and antiviral resistance and progress in the development of new, effective compounds.

Appropriately for the venue, marine microbiology and fish diseases and their prevention by vaccination has also been identified as a special topic. Provision of the education and training of the future generation of microbiologists is a subject of international concern. Is microbiology losing ground in educational and research opportunities? The meeting will offer an international exchange of views and hopefully identify some ways forward.

Registration:

The registration details are given on the SGM website;
<<http://www.sgm.ac.uk/meetings>>.