Preface

Foodborne illness in the United States continues to be a dynamic and, to us, fascinating field. Dr Keusch’s introductory article provides an absorbing global perspective on the history of food and foodborne illness throughout the centuries. His contribution is a perfect launching point for a series of articles that highlight the state of foodborne illness in the United States in the early 21st century, and some of the emerging trends.

We know that much has changed in the past 15 years. In 1996, the US Food Safety and Inspection Service established requirements of the meat and poultry industry, to reduce the incidence of foodborne illness. This program has resulted in an overall decline in bacterial foodborne illness, but some bacterial foodborne illnesses, such as Campylobacter and Vibrio, continue to increase in incidence.

Drs Braden and Tauxe’s article discusses these current epidemiologic trends. For diagnostic methodology and treatment updates, articles by Drs Donnenberg and Narayanan, and Dr Steiner are comprehensive resources for the infectious diseases physician faced with a patient suffering from a foodborne illness. An impact on foodborne illness is the fact that vulnerable populations in the United States continue to increase. There are more Americans age 65 and older now than at any other time in US history, and the United Network for Organ Sharing (UNOS) data show over the past 5 years (2008-2012) a steady number of approximately 28,000 solid organ transplants per annum. Dr Acheson discusses foodborne illness in these, and other, populations at risk, and reviews measures to prevent foodborne illness. Although the vast majority of cases of foodborne illness remain self-limited, Dr Batz’s article describes the long-term sequelae of foodborne illness, and who is at higher risk for these sequelae.

We chose several organisms for special focus. Our understanding of treatment of Shiga toxin-producing Escherichia coli continues to be refined, and Dr Tarr’s article provides a comprehensive review of treatment. The emergence of a novel Shiga toxin-producing enteroaggregative E coli is discussed in an article by Drs Leong and Jandhyala. As norovirus continues to be the most important foodborne illness in the United States hands down, with recent strides being made in vaccine development, an article by Dr Li is dedicated to this important pathogen. To round out the focus on emerging infections, Drs Hoover and Rodriguez-Palacios provides an extensive and highly intriguing review of the data supporting the concept that Clostridium difficile...
may be a foodborne pathogen. Last but not least, just as Dr Keusch’s article provides a historical global view of foodborne illness, Dr McEntire reviews present global impacts on foodborne illness in the United States.

We hope that infectious diseases physicians and others find this volume helpful to their practice. We also hope to transmit some of our interest in this field to others, as it is clear that foodborne illness is not a new problem, but continues, chameleon-like, to provide new challenges and has not yet been conquered.

David Acheson, MD, FRCP
The Acheson Group
1 Old Frankfort Way
Frankfort, IL 60423, USA

Jennifer McEntire, PhD
The Acheson Group
1 Old Frankfort Way
Frankfort, IL 60423, USA

Cheleste M. Thorpe, MD
Tufts Medical Center
800 Washington Street Box 041
Boston, MA 02111, USA

E-mail addresses:
david@achesongroup.com (D. Acheson)
jennifer@achesongroup.com (J. McEntire)
c thorpe@tuftsmedicalcenter.org (C.M. Thorpe)