

Foodborne and Waterborne Bacterial Pathogens

Epidemiology, Evolution and Molecular Biology

Edited by

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Preface

The developing scenario of global changes in climate with increasing frequency of natural disasters linked to the threat of enhanced epidemic spread of foodborne and waterborne diseases warrants an update of knowledge on these infectious diseases and the causative agents. Gastrointestinal diseases of which a substantial proportion are due to food- or waterborne bacterial pathogens is the second most common cause of morbidity throughout the world after acute respiratory tract illness. In children alone there may be between 3.5 and 18 million deaths per year worldwide from diarrhoeal diseases.

The past 10–15 years have witnessed the unravelling of remarkable new insights on the biology of the pathogens that spread through water or contaminated foodstuff. These include the discovery of the filamentous phage that encodes cholera toxin in *Vibrio cholerae*, the existence of two chromosomes in *Vibrio* species and the whole genome sequencing of a number of these and related pathogens. The discovery of new mobile and integrative genetic elements, such as conjugative transposons, integrons, pathogenicity islands and phages, involved in horizontal transfer of virulence genes have provided new insights on the emergence of new pathogenic strains and their variants. Several foodborne and waterborne diseases have emerged in the past two decades as a consequence of changes in aetiological agents, hosts and the environment. Despite tremendous recent development in our understanding of the emergence, infectivity and spread of bacterial pathogens, such as *Vibrio cholerae*, pathogenic

Escherichia coli, *Salmonella*, *Shigella* and *Campylobacter* spp., updated compilations of this knowledge are rare. It is therefore, timely to compile a volume comprising the current status of research on the biology of these and related pathogens.

A tremendous amount of pioneering work in recent times and the voluminous information flow has provided the impetus for putting this book together. At this time a whole set of new research has been directed towards understanding how new pathogenic strains emerge, newly emerged strains replace old strains, their survival strategy and competition in the environment, the molecular mechanism of cell to cell communication, and biofilm formation, as well as the genetic determinants of epidemic and pandemic properties. In this book, we have attempted to capture the essence of this mighty deluge of information regarding bacterial pathogens that spread through food and water. The scope of this book, as emphasized by the publishers, is on the epidemiology and molecular biology of these pathogens. Leading experts in the fields have described various bacterial pathogens, their pathogenic properties, population genetics, virulence genes, epidemiology, identification and control strategies. Other topics include the molecular basis for enhanced transmissibility of waterborne pathogens, their mode of survival in the environment, and above all the evolution of the different species to attain increased fitness both as a pathogen and an environmental organism. I hope that the readers find this book interesting and comprehensive.

Shah M. Faruque

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