

Report on UK publicly funded research relating to *Clostridium*

Area of research interest: [Foodborne pathogens](#)

Clostridia are a group of bacteria which can cause human diseases. *Clostridium botulinum* and *Clostridium perfringens* are two organisms particularly associated with foodborne illness. In each case, illness is caused by a toxin produced by the bacteria, rather than by the presence of the bacteria themselves. One of the illnesses, botulism, is rare in the UK, and when it does occur, it is very seldom foodborne. However, without treatment botulism is often fatal. *Clostridium perfringens* causes a type of food poisoning characterised by diarrhoea. There are several other species of *Clostridium* which have been associated with human foodborne illness, but none to a significant level.

Foodborne illness due to these bacteria can be prevented by good management of food preservation, preparation and handling. In the last fifteen years, research has focused on identifying how best to do this, providing a basis for recommendations by the Food Standards Agency to the food industry and consumers.

The MSFFG is a cross-representational body involving bodies who fund microbiological research in the area of food safety. Membership includes representatives from the Food Standards Agency, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council, the Department of Health, the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, Northern Ireland, the Environment Agency, the Food Safety Promotion Board, the Health Protection Agency, the Meat and Livestock Commission, the Medical Research Council, the Scottish Executive Environment and Rural Affairs Department Science and Research Group and the Scottish Executive Department of Health. The Group's terms of reference are:

To assist the co-ordination of publicly funded research and development on the microbiological safety of the food chain with a view to informing the research and development effort, identifying gaps and overlaps, and providing reports as appropriate.

A similar report is currently being prepared on antibiotic resistance and the Group is updating its report on *Campylobacter* research.

Research report

England, Northern Ireland and Wales

WORD

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