



**Catherine Gangell**

Ph.D. student  
Respiratory Medicine  
Princess Margaret Hospital  
Roberts Road, Subiaco WA  
E-mail: cgangell@cyllene.uwa.edu.au



**Neil Wilson**

EMMA Laboratory E8A 260  
Department of Biological Sciences  
Macquarie University NSW 2109  
Tel: (02) 9850 6977  
E-mail: nwilson@els.mq.edu.au



**Philip Button**

PhD Student  
(The University of Melbourne)  
Food Science Australia  
Private Bag 16  
Werribee, VIC 3030  
E-mail: p.button@pgrad.unimelb.edu.au  
Philip.Button@foodscience.afisc.csiro.au

## Welcome to 2004

The start of a new year has brought about some changes to this section formerly known as *Young Bugs Banter*. This year the team Catherine Gangell, Neil Wilson and Phillip Button hopes to keep you updated with the progress of postgraduate students around the States and Territories of Australia. So at the start of 2004 we say goodbye to the last young bug, Joanne Clarke, and wish her well in her post-doctoral studies in America and welcome our newest editor Neil Wilson.

We hope the changes that we have made to this section will demonstrate the potential of the microbiology youth as the future of microbiology in Australia.

Due to the new format of this section of the *Microbiology Australia* journal, we ask for your patience as we try to embark on this new endeavour. We welcome any comments or feedback on the changes made to this section, and if you wish for your work to be published, please contact the closest editor to your State.

## Profiles

### Neil Wilson

I completed my undergraduate degree at Macquarie University and have continued on to do a PhD at the same institution. My PhD research is focussed on the diversity and function of integrons outside the clinical setting. Integrons are a site-specific recombination system found in a phylogenetically diverse array

of bacteria. They have played a major role in the dissemination of multiple antibiotic resistance among pathogenic bacteria and are likely to have played a more general role in the evolution of bacteria. After completing my PhD, I hope to take on a post-doctoral position overseas.

### Philip Button

The work reported here is research from my MSc in the Department of Agricultural Sciences at La Trobe University, entitled Bioassay of a novel siderophore produced by *Pseudomonas fragi* and of aerobactin production by *Escherichia coli*. I am currently doing a PhD at The University of Melbourne and Food Science Australia investigating the characterisation, detection and sources of proteases and lipases from *Pseudomonas* species in dairy products. I completed a BSc in microbiology with a variety of other biomedical science subjects at James Cook, and followed this with an Honours at Ballarat. My PhD project is excellent, as it is giving me many new skills and knowledge – much more than I could get in many other projects. If I had realised before I started what my PhD was going to teach me, this would have been my main motivation for selecting this project.

With my current research, I'll be delving deeper into the biochemistry (at the molecular level) of milk spoilage caused by hydrolytic enzymes from *P. fluorescens* and *P. fragi*. I am really passionate about research and, following my PhD, I want to pursue a research career, hopefully by obtaining a postdoctoral position, ideally overseas.

## An indication that aerobactin is the only hydroxamate siderophore produced by *Escherichia coli*

### Introduction

*Escherichia coli* produces two siderophores in order to chelate iron and satisfy its iron requirements under conditions of iron deficiency. These two siderophores are enterochelin (a catecholate) and aerobactin (a hydroxamate). With a large number of different bacterial siderophores discovered, it was felt that *E. coli* may produce an additional hydroxamate siderophore, besides aerobactin. The aim of this study was to determine the likelihood of production of an additional hydroxamate siderophore, other than aerobactin, by *E. coli*.

### Materials and methods

Previously this laboratory<sup>1,2</sup> showed that a large number of *E. coli* strains produced an unknown hydroxamate siderophore. In this investigation, some hydroxamate positive isolates were tested for their ability to produce aerobactin. The investigation was carried out using an aerobactin bioassay<sup>3</sup> with *E. coli* LG1522 as the indicator strain. Composition of the bioassay was an iron deficient M9 agar, with differing iron deficiency (used at different stages in testing) due to variation in concentration of the chelating agent, 2,2'-dipyridyl. Initial testing was with 200 μM 2,2'-dipyridyl, decreased to 150 μM 2,2'-dipyridyl and 125 μM 2,2'-dipyridyl. Chemical assay for the presence of siderophore was with the CAS assay<sup>4</sup> and specific detection for



hydroxamate was by means of a modified Csaky assay<sup>5</sup>.

## Results and discussion

All isolates were tested initially in an iron deficient medium containing 200 $\mu$ M 2,2'-dipyridyl. Those strains that were negative in the first stage aerobactin bioassays performed with 200 $\mu$ M 2,2'-dipyridyl were subsequently retested. This involved streaking on media containing either 150 $\mu$ M 2,2'-dipyridyl, and for those remaining negative, further streaking on media containing 125 $\mu$ M 2,2'-dipyridyl. Of the 48 isolates, the two (4.2%) which consistently yielded negative results when tested with all aerobactin bioassays were of much interest and were tested for ability to produce siderophore as indicated by the CAS agar method of Milagres *et al.*<sup>6</sup>. The growth medium used was M9 containing 125 $\mu$ M 2,2'-dipyridyl.

Once siderophore production was confirmed, it was necessary to confirm the production of hydroxamate in iron-deficient medium (deferrated M9 containing 125 $\mu$ M 2,2'-dipyridyl), by a modified Csaky assay. Growth was observed in this iron-deficient minimal medium (without supplements), although the growth under iron limitation was much reduced. Neither isolate was positive in this chemical assay for hydroxamate. As aerobactin synthesis genes are mostly found on the pColV plasmid, a negative result such as this could demonstrate that a loss of the plasmid has occurred, which is likely when the strains are grown or stored under conditions which place no selective pressure on retention of the plasmid.

This study concluded that there are sufficient indications to suggest that *E. coli* produces only one hydroxamate siderophore, aerobactin.

## Acknowledgements

This work was conducted during the author's MSc candidature, under the supervision of Dr Richard Luke. The author wishes to offer sincere appreciation to Dr Luke for his supervision during candidature and for continued support and willingness to help. In particular, many thanks are due for assistance at all stages of the work described herein.

## References

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6. Milagres AMF, Machuca A & Napoleao D. Detection of siderophore production from several fungi and bacteria by a modification of chrome azurol S (CAS) agar plate assay. *Journal of Microbiological Methods* 1999; 37:1-6.



**Cameron Gordon**

Cameron is a PhD student studying in the Arbovirus Surveillance and Research laboratory, Department of Microbiology at the University of Western Australia. Cameron joined the research group after previously doing honours in microbiology in which he investigated water-borne pathogen decay in aquifers.

Cameron is currently studying *Predisposing factors and management strategies for outbreaks of Ross River virus disease in a coastal region of south-western Australia*, a PhD project funded by the Val Lishman Research Foundation Inc., together with southwest cities and shires, with supervision, logistical and additional financial support from the Department of Health, Western Australia and the University of Western Australia.

Ross River (RR) virus disease is a major public health issue, endemic in many coastal regions in the south-west of Western Australia. A considerable amount of research has been conducted on RR virus and other arboviruses in the region. However, there are important aspects

about arboviral disease transmission that are poorly understood. This research project was designed to investigate some of these aspects further. Specifically, the aims of this project are to:

- Further define the most important mosquito vectors of the virus. This involves field studies to investigate species composition, abundance and infection rates, together with laboratory studies to investigate vector competence.
- Determine the capacity of important vector species to disperse from breeding sites to residential areas. This will be achieved through mark-release-recapture experiments using fluorescent dusts.
- Determine whether high levels of RR virus transmission are linked to the age of the adult mosquito population. Ovarian dissections will be performed on individual female mosquitoes to determine if they had laid eggs. This chronological aging of mosquito populations will then be compared to mosquito infection rates, and other aspects of the study, to determine if there are any significant correlations.
- Further define the animal hosts of RR virus and whether they can help predict outbreaks. Native and domestic species are being sampled to determine the timing and rate of their infection. The use of a sentinel horse surveillance programme is being investigated for its potential to predict outbreaks of RR virus disease.
- Determine the epidemiology of RR virus in people living within the study site. Detailed mapping and case follow-up questionnaires are being carried out to determine when and where the risk of infection was greatest and how this correlates with results from other components of the study.

It is envisaged that this project will answer important questions about RR virus that are significant at both a local and regional level. A considerable component of the study is directed at obtaining results that will be directly applicable to Local Government mosquito management programmes. Upon completion of his PhD, Cameron aspires towards postdoctoral research in a similar field of study. For further information, please e-mail [cjgordon@cyllene.uwa.edu.au](mailto:cjgordon@cyllene.uwa.edu.au)



## Awards and Prizes

Nominations are invited for the following Awards and Prizes. For further information, please:

See the ASM website:

[www.theasm.com.au](http://www.theasm.com.au)

National Office: (03) 9867 8699

E-mail: [admin@theasm.com.au](mailto:admin@theasm.com.au)

### ASM Research Trust Fellowship

The Research Trust aims to promote excellence in microbiology by supporting younger microbiologists for specified research projects leading to career advancement; or to assist Australian microbiologists returning from overseas studies to re-establish their careers in Australia. The purpose of the Trust is to do either or both of the following:

- Fund a person to undertake scientific research in microbiology and related fields in Australia; and/or
- Fund a person employed by another body to undertake scientific research in those areas that may prove to be of value to Australia.

The award will be in the amount of up to \$7,500.

*Closing date for applications: 1 June 2004*

### ASM Foundation Travel Grant

The Society's Foundation Travel Grant sponsors Australian microbiologists, especially those in the formative stages of their careers, to undertake professional development in appropriate laboratories in Australia or New Zealand. This Grant provides funding to assist in financing:

- Short postgraduate refresher courses in Australian on aspects of microbiology.
- Visits by international or Australian specialist microbiologists to and within Australia for specific purposes which would benefit many members.
- Visits by Australian specialist microbiologists to international symposia or advanced courses with the prime object of the knowledge gained being disseminated to other Australian microbiologists upon return of the specialist.
- Visits by Australian specialist microbiologists overseas on Lecture

Exchange Programs with other learned societies.

- ASM scholarships for postgraduate training of members.
- Other purposes recommended by the Foundation Committee and deemed by National Council to be consistent with the aims of the Foundation.

The ASM Foundation Travel Grant normally provides from several hundred to a maximum of \$2,000 per scholarship. Applicants who have secured significant support (ca. 50%) from other sources will be assessed more favourably than those who have not.

*Closing dates for applications (bi-annually)  
31 July 2004, 31 January 2005*

### David White Excellence in Teaching Award

Nominations are invited for the ASM Excellence in Teaching Award from members (MASMs) of the ASM of at least 5 years' standing, to recognise excellence in the teaching of, and/or innovation in the teaching of microbiology in Australia.

The award, consisting of a bronze plaque plus \$1,000, will be presented at the ASM's Annual Scientific Meeting. The recipient will be invited to conduct a workshop on some aspect of teaching of microbiology at the meeting subsequent to the year in which the award is given.

*Closing date for nominations: 1 June 2004*

### Frank Fenner Research Award

Nominations for this award are invited from Members (MASMs) and Fellows (FASMs) of the ASM of at least 5 years' standing at the time of application, who have been engaged in research at postdoctoral level or equivalent for less than 15 years. The purpose of this award is to recognise distinguished contributions in any area of Australian research in microbiology by scientists in a formative stage of their career, rather than to reward senior scientists for a lifetime of achievement. Not less than 75% of the candidate's publications must have arisen from work done in Australia.

The award, which consists of a bronze plaque plus \$1,000, will be presented at the ASM's Annual Scientific Meeting. The recipient will deliver the Frank Fenner Lecture at the meeting.

*Closing date for applications: 1 June 2004*

### Pfizer / ASM Mycology Encouragement Award

This is an encouragement award to assist a laboratory scientist/technician to attend and make a presentation in the field of medical mycology at the ASM's Annual Scientific Meeting. The prize consists of a return economy class airfare, conference registration, cheque for \$500, an allowance of \$120 per day for 5 nights towards hotel accommodation, and a commemorative wall plaque.

*Closing date for applications: 1 June 2004*

### BD Awards

Seven BD Awards are available each year to finance one Student member from each ASM Branch to attend the Annual Scientific Meeting of the ASM. Each award consists of a return economy airfare, conference registration and an allowance for accommodation.

Each recipient must submit an Abstract to the conference organisers and present a paper at the Meeting.

*Closing date for applications: 1 May 2004*

Contact your local Branch for further details and method of application

### Vic Skerman Student Prize

This prize is awarded annually to a student member of the Society who has contributed, while enrolled as a Student Member of the ASM, the best review article to the Society's journal for the period 1 July to 30 June in any year.

The prize consists of \$500 and a certificate, and will be awarded at the ASM's Annual Scientific Meeting.

*Closing date for applications: 1 June 2004.*



## Awards

### The bioMérieux ASM Identifying Resistance Award

This is a recognition award to an individual on the basis of career achievements in the field of the identification of bacterial resistance to antimicrobials in a medical setting.

- The applicant must be a member of the ASM or NZMS.
- The applicant must submit a curriculum vitae (including a list of publications), the names and addresses (including e-mail address) of two referees, together with a brief summary of their contribution to the study of bacterial resistance to antimicrobials in a clinical setting.
- The award committee will take into account the quality and originality of the published research and service to Australasian microbiology in general. The award is based on the recipient's entire career rather than on a single achievement.

The award consists of a \$1000 cash prize, a commemorative plaque, and the provision of flights and accommodation for the recipient to attend the presentation ceremony to be held at the ASM's Annual Scientific Meeting.

The award committee will consist of the ASM President, Chair Antimicrobials SIG and one other nominee of the Antimicrobial SIG.

*Closing date: 1 June 2004.*

### The Merck Sharp & Dohme ASM Mycology Award

This is a recognition award to an individual on the basis of career achievements in the field of mycology.

- The applicant must be a member of the ASM or NZMS.
- The applicant must submit a curriculum vitae (including a list of publications), the names and addresses (including e-mail address) of two referees, together with a brief summary of their contribution to mycology.
- The award committee will take into account the quality and originality of

the published research and service to Australasian mycology in general. The award is based on the recipient's entire career rather than on a single achievement.

The award consists of a \$1000 cash prize, a commemorative plaque and up to \$1000 in travel expenses for the recipient to attend the presentation ceremony to be held at the ASM's Annual Scientific Meeting.

The award committee will consist of the ASM President, Chair Mycology SIG and one other nominee of the Mycology SIG.

*Closing date: 1 June 2004.*

### The Oxoid ASM Culture Media Award

This is an encouragement award to assist an individual to attend and make a presentation on the use of culture media at the ASM's Annual Scientific Meeting.

- The applicant must be a member of the ASM or NZMS.
- It will be a necessary requirement for the winner to present a paper or poster relevant to the use of culture media in microbiology at the meeting. This may be based on original research, a method evaluation or validation or a review of a culture based diagnostic method, for example this may include improved isolation methods, rapid or presumptive identification, or novel ways of using culture media.
- A curriculum vitae, current position description and the names and addresses (including e-mail address) of two referees, together with a brief synopsis of the presentation and a copy of the abstract to be submitted for presentation.
- The award committee will take into account the eligibility of the applicant for an encouragement award, together with the quality and originality of the planned presentation and its relevance to the use of culture media in microbiology.

The award consists of a \$1000 cash prize, a commemorative plaque and up to \$1000

in travel expenses for the recipient to attend the presentation ceremony to be held at the ASM's Annual Scientific Meeting.

The award committee will consist of the ASM President, Chair Culture Media SIG and one other nominee of the Culture Media SIG.

*Closing date: 1 June 2004.*

### The Pfizer ASM Mycology Encouragement Award

This is an encouragement award to assist a laboratory scientist/technician to attend and make a presentation in the field of medical mycology at the ASM's Annual Scientific Meeting.

- The applicant must be a member of the ASM.
- It will be a necessary requirement for the winner to present a paper or poster in the field of medical mycology at the meeting. This may be based on original research, case reports, a new or updated methodology or a review of a particular mycosis etc.
- A curriculum vitae, current position description and the names and addresses (including e-mail address) of two referees, together with a brief synopsis of the presentation and a copy of the abstract to be submitted for either an oral or poster presentation.
- The award committee will take into account the eligibility of the applicant for an encouragement award, together with the quality and originality of the planned presentation and its relevance to medical mycology.

The award consists of a return economy class airfare, conference registration, cheque for \$500, an allowance of \$120 per day for 5 nights towards hotel accommodation and a commemorative plaque.

The award committee will consist of the President, Chair Mycology SIG and one other nominee of the Mycology SIG.

*Closing date: 1 June 2004.*



## The Roche ASM Molecular Diagnostic Award

This is an encouragement award to assist an individual to attend and make a presentation on the use of PCR in the field of diagnostic infectious diseases at the ASM's Annual Scientific Meeting.

- The applicant must be a member of the ASM or NZMS.
- It will be a necessary requirement for the winner to present a paper on the use of PCR in the field of diagnostic infectious diseases at the meeting. This may be based on original research, case presentations, or a review of a PCR method used to diagnose an infectious disease.
- A curriculum vitae, current position description and the names and addresses (including e-mail address) of two referees, together with a brief synopsis of the presentation and a copy of the abstract to be submitted for presentation.

- The award committee will take into account the eligibility of the applicant for an encouragement award, together with the quality and originality of the planned presentation and its relevance to molecular diagnostic microbiology.

The award consists of a \$1000 cash prize, a commemorative plaque and up to \$1000 in travel expenses for the recipient to attend the presentation ceremony to be held at the ASM's Annual Scientific Meeting.

The award committee will consist of the ASM President, Chair Molecular Microbiology SIG and one other nominee of the Molecular Microbiology SIG.

*Closing date: 1 June 2004.*

## ASM Teachers' Travel Award

Announcing a new award to encourage ASM members involved in teaching microbiology at the tertiary level to attend the annual scientific meeting of the

Australian Society for Microbiology. Applicants may be employed full-time, part time or sessionally.

To apply for this award teachers should submit a curriculum vitae, which should include a description of their current position, together with a letter of recommendation from their Head of the Department confirming their involvement in, and commitment to, a teaching programme in the department and a brief synopsis of their area of special interest in education. This synopsis would provide the basis for their presentation of a poster or participation in a session organised by the Education Special Interest Group at the annual scientific meeting.

The award consists of up to \$1000 in travel expenses for the recipient to attend the Annual Scientific Meeting.

*Closing date: 1 June 2004.*

## Web Review



### Astrobiology

<http://nai.arc.nasa.gov/>

Welcome to the NASA Astrobiology Institute. NAI carries out collaborative research and education in astrobiology, the interdisciplinary science that seeks answers to these fundamental questions.

<http://astrobiology.arc.nasa.gov/index.cfm>

Astrobiology is the study of life in the universe. It provides a biological perspective to many areas of NASA research.

### National arboviral and malaria surveillance website

<http://www.health.gov.au/arbovirus>

A new website for arbovirus surveillance has been established under the auspices of the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing. The National Arboviral and Malaria

Surveillance website was launched in early November 2003.

The website is a joint Commonwealth and State initiative and has been designed to provide information on arboviral disease in Australia to assist in the control of arboviral disease and malaria. The website aims to increase public awareness of the risks of mosquito-borne disease, and to facilitate the dissemination of related surveillance data.

### Australasian Society for Infectious Diseases: Bioterrorism Response Advisory Group

<http://www.racp.edu.au/asid/bioterror.htm>

ASID recognises the increasing importance of the worldwide potential threat of bioterrorism. Australia's geographical position does not guarantee its freedom from this threat. As such, ASID has established the ASID Bioterrorism

Response Advisory Group. This group has been established to develop appropriate responses to the issue of bioterrorism, particularly focussing on the needs of members of the Society.

This website developed by way of the Response Group includes the ASID Policy on Bioterrorism together with resources for the membership in their response to this issue. Further development of this site will be ongoing and members are encouraged to contact the Response Group through the ASID secretariat with comments or suggestions for improvements.

- ASID policy on biological and toxin weapons.
- ASID summary of selected potential agents of bioterrorism.
- Bioterrorism web resources.
- Contact details in case of a suspected bioterrorism event.



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Dr Nicholas Medveczky

TGAL Immunology

PO Box 100

Woden, ACT 2606

Tel: (02) 6232 8491

E-mail: nicholas.medveczky@health.gov.au

### NSW

Ms Julia Guinan

Roche Diagnostics Australia

31 Victoria Avenue

Castle Hill, NSW 2154

Tel: (02) 9899 7999

E-mail: julia.guinan@roche.com

### Qld

Dr Patrick Blackall

Animal Research Institute

Locked Mail Bag 4

Moorooka, Qld 4105

Tel: (07) 3362 9498

E-mail: blackap@dpi.qld.gov.au

### SA

Miss Vicki Papazaharias

Boehringer Ingelheim Pty Ltd

Tel: 0439 997 457

E-mail: vpapazaharias@boehringer.com.au

### Tas

Ms Sarah Foster

LGH

Cnr Franklin and Charles Streets

Launceston, Tas 7250

Tel: (03) 6348 7670

E-mail: sarah\_anne\_74@hotmail.com

### Vic

Ms Sue Cornish

4 Wollahra Place

Heathmont, Vic 3135

Tel: (03) 9729 4449

E-mail: Scornish@mayfield.edu.au

### WA

Ms Nicola Barrett

Royal Perth Hospital

Wellington Street,

Perth, WA 6000

Tel: (08) 9224 2444

E-mail: nicola.barrett@health.wa.gov.au

### NT (sub branch)

Mr Kevin Freeman

12 Beacon Court

Palmerston, NT 0830

Tel: (08) 8922 8685

E-mail: kevin.freeman@nt.gov.au

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Dr Ray Akhurst

CSIRO, Division of Entomology

GPO Box 1700

Canberra, ACT 2601

Tel: (02) 6246 4123

E-mail: rayakhurst@ento.csiro.au

### BioSafety

Mr Lee Smythe

Queensland Health LEPTO

Scientific Services

PO Box 594

Archerfield, Qld 4108

Tel: (07) 3274 9064

E-mail: lee\_smythe@health.qld.gov.au

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Dr Stephen Graves

Geelong Hospital

Australian Rickettsial Reference

Laboratory, PO Box 281

Geelong VIC 3220

E-mail: stepheng@barwonhealth.org.au

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Emeritus Prof Nancy Millis

University of Melbourne

School of Microbiology

Parkville, Vic 3052

Tel: (03) 9344 5707

E-mail: jmjohn@unimelb.edu.au

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Dr Ailsa Hocking

CSIRO

Division of Food Science & Technology

PO Box 52

North Ryde, NSW 2113

Tel: (02) 9490 8520

E-mail: ailsa.hocking@foodscience.afisc.csiro.au

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Assoc Prof Elizabeth Dax

National Serology Reference Laboratory

4 Fl, Healy Building

41 Victoria Parade

Fitzroy, Vic 3065

Tel: (03) 9418 1111

E-mail: liz@nrl.gov.au

### National Scientific Advisory Committee

Prof Julian Rood

Monash University

Dept. of Microbiology

Clayton, Vic 3800

Tel: (03) 9905 4825

E-mail: julian.rood@med.monash.edu.au

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Hospital Road, Concord, NSW 2173

Tel: (02) 9767 6658

E-mail: merlino@cherry.com.au

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EML Consulting Services

1/148 Tennyson Memorial Drive

Tennyson, Qld 4105

Tel: (07) 3898 3622

E-mail: ed.stuttard@eml.com.au

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Mr Paul Hakendorf

Flinders Medical Centre

Clinical Epidemiology &

Health Outcomes Unit

Bedford Park, SA 5042

Tel: (08) 8204 5327 Ext 4451

E-mail: paul.hakendorf@flinders.edu.au

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AMS Laboratories

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Tel: (02) 9567 8544

E-mail: applied@tig.com.au

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University of Tasmania

School of Agriculture Science

GPO Box 252-54, Hobart, Tas 7001

Tel: (03) 6226 2628

E-mail: laura.maddock@utas.edu.au

### Culture Media

Ms Alida Scholtes

University of Melbourne

Media Preparation Unit

Dept of Microbiology & Immunology

Parkville, Vic 3052

Tel: (03) 9347 9821

E-mail: alida@unimelb.edu.au

### Education

Ms Cheryl Power

University of Melbourne

Dept of Microbiology

Parkville, Vic 3052

Tel: (03) 8344 0332

E-mail: cheryljp@unimelb.edu.au

### Food Microbiology

Mr Glen Higgs

Food Science Australia

Microbiology & Production Hygiene

PO Box 3312, Tingalpa DC, Qld 4173

Tel: (07) 3214 2000

E-mail: glen.higgs@foodscience.afisc.csiro.au

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### Microbial Ecology

Dr John Bowman

University of Tasmania Antarctic CRC

GPO Box 252-80

Hobart, Tas 7001

Tel: (03) 6226 2776

E-mail: john.bowman@utas.edu.au

### Microbial Physiology

Dr Rick Cavicchioli

University of New South Wales

School of Microbiology & Immunology

Sydney, NSW 2052

Tel: (02) 9385 3516

E-mail: r.cavicchioli@unsw.edu.au

### Molecular Microbiology

Dr Elizabeth Hartland

Monash University

Dept. of Microbiology

Clayton, Vic 3800

Tel: (03) 9905 4323

E-mail: Liz.Hartland@med.monash.edu.au

### Mycobacteria

Mr Richard Lumb

IMVS

Infectious Diseases Laboratories

PO Box 14, Rundle Mall,

Adelaide, SA 5000

Tel: (08) 8222 3579

E-mail: richardlumb@imvs.sa.gov.au

### Mycology

Dr Weiland Meyer

Westmead Hospital

ICPMR CIDMLS Microbiology

Level 2, Room 3114A

Darcy Road, Westmead, NSW 2145

Tel: (02) 8344 5701

E-mail: w.meyer@usyd.edu.au

### Mycoplasmatales

Dr Steven Djordjevic

Elizabeth Macarthur Agricultural Institute

Private Mail Bag 8

Camden, NSW 2570

Tel: (02) 4640 6426

E-mail: steve.djordjevic@agric.nsw.gov.au

### Ocular Microbiology

Dr Mark Willcox

University of New South Wales

Rupert Myers Building

Sydney, NSW 2052

Tel: (02) 9385 7524

E-mail: m.willcox@crccert.unsw.edu.au

### Parasitology and Tropical Medicine

Mrs Janice Stavropoulos

Liverpool Hospital, Microbiology Dept

Locked Bag 7090

Liverpool BC, NSW 1871

Tel: (02) 9828 5138

E-mail: janice.stavropoulos@swhs.nsw.gov.au

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Centre for Advanced Food Research

University of Western Sydney

Locked Bag 1797, SPDC, NSW 1797

Tel: (02) 4570 1231 Fax: (02) 4570 1954

E-mail: k.kailasapathy@uws.edu.au

### Public Health Microbiology

Dr Geoffrey Hogg

University of Melbourne

Microbiological Diagnostic Unit

Parkville, Vic 3052

Tel: (03) 8344 5713

E-mail: g.hogg@mdu.unimelb.edu.au

### Rapid Methods

Vacant

### Serology

Ms Robyn Wood

QML, 60 Ferry Road

Westend, Qld 4101

Tel: (07) 3840 4046

E-mail: robynwood@qml.com.au

### Students

Ms Joanne Clarke

Macquarie University

Biological Sciences

North Ryde NSW 2113

Bundoora Vic 3083

Tel: (02) 9850 6978

E-mail: jclarke@ma.bio.mq.edu.au

### Veterinary Microbiology

Dr Glenn Browning

The University of Melbourne

Vet Preclinic Centre

Gratton Street



## Meetings

Contributions listing relevant meetings are welcome. Please send to: <pbishop@nursing.usyd.edu.au>

### 2004

**14-17 April**  
**Paris**

**Genomes 2004**

Watch the website [www.asm.org/](http://www.asm.org/)

**27-28 April**  
**Royal Sonesta Hotel,**  
**Cambridge, MA, USA**

**Cambridge Healthtech Institute's Sixth Annual Phage Display Technologies The Chemistry Set for Proteins and Small Molecules**

For more information please contact:  
Christina Lingham  
Cambridge Healthtech Institute  
Tel: (1) 617 630 1364  
Fax: (1) 617 630 1325  
E-mail: [clingham@healthtech.com](mailto:clingham@healthtech.com)

**1-4 May**  
**Prague, Czech Republic**

**14th European Congress of Clinical Microbiology and Infectious Diseases**

[www.escmid.org/eccmid2004](http://www.escmid.org/eccmid2004).

**10-17 May**

**National Medical Laboratory Science Week**

The National Medical Laboratory Science Week (NMLSW) is an annual activity coordinated by the Australian Institute of Medical of Scientists (AIMS) to promote the role of medical laboratories and their staff in the maintenance of the health of the nation. Activities are conducted at the national level by AIMS National Office, and at the local level by the various State branches of AIMS.

Detailed planning for the NMLSW has commenced and these pages will be updated as the program for the week is developed.

Web: <http://www.aims.org.au/nmlsw/index.html>

**24-26 May**  
**Crystal Gateway Marriott Hotel**  
**Arlington, Virginia**

**The National Foundation for Infectious Diseases (NFID) Seventh Annual Conference On Vaccine Research**

<http://www.nfid.org/conferences/vaccine04/>

**9-11 June**  
**Hobart, TAS**

**Australian Infection Control Association 3rd Biennial Conference**  
**Infection control:**  
**The clean green approach**

*Major themes include:*  
*New pathogens – new problems*  
*Alternative approaches to the management of infection*  
*Out of hospital but still in control*  
*Surveillance*  
*Perioperative issues*  
*Health care worker vaccination*  
*Infection control – nuts & bolts*  
*Approaches to the control of multi resistant organisms*  
*Environmental cleaning*

Contact the conference manager to register your interest  
Australian Infection Control Association  
Third Biennial Conference 2004  
C/- Intermedia Convention & Event Management  
PO Box 1280  
Milton QLD 4064  
Tel: (07) 3858 5532  
Fax: (07) 3858 5510  
E-mail: [aica04@im.com.au](mailto:aica04@im.com.au)

**28-30 June**  
**Hyatt Regency Bethesda**  
**Bethesda, Maryland**

**The National Foundation for Infectious Diseases (NFID) 2004 Annual Conference On Antimicrobial Resistance**

<http://www.nfid.org/conferences/resistance04/>  
e-mail [info@nfid.org](mailto:info@nfid.org)

**24-27 July**  
**Banff, Alberta, Canada**

**American Society for Microbiology ASM Conference on Cell-Cell Communication in Bacteria**

Website: <http://www.asm.org/Meetings/>  
Because of the recent explosion in research in the area of cell-cell communication in bacteria and its newly discovered role in eliciting human disease, the ASM hosted a conference devoted to cell-cell signalling

during the summer of 2001. This meeting was so well received by its participants that the ASM became committed to provide an ongoing venue for this topic, and will host a second conference in July of 2004.

**19-23 September**  
**Chesapeake Bay, Maryland**  
**An ASM Conference**  
**Extremophiles 2004: 5th International Conference on Extremophiles**

**26 September – 1 October**  
**Sydney SuperDome**

**ASM 2004 National Conference**

Conference Manager: Janette Sofronidis  
Australian Society for Microbiology  
E-mail: [janette@theasm.com.au](mailto:janette@theasm.com.au)  
Chair, Local Organising Committee: Tom Olma  
E-mail: [tomo@icpmr.wsahs.nsw.gov.au](mailto:tomo@icpmr.wsahs.nsw.gov.au)  
Website [www.ASM2004.org](http://www.ASM2004.org)

**6-9 October**  
**Portland, Oregon**

**ASM Conference on Functional Genomics and Bioinformatics Approaches to Infectious Disease Research**

This ASM conference will  
(1) highlight new developments in genomics and bioinformatics technologies,  
(2) address the challenges of data storage, interpretation and sharing  
(3) describe recent application of such technologies to infectious disease research.

The conference will bring leaders in the functional genomics and bioinformatics fields together with microbiologists, virologists and immunologists who use or intend to use such approaches.