

OUTBREAK

A cluster of listeriosis cases in South Australia

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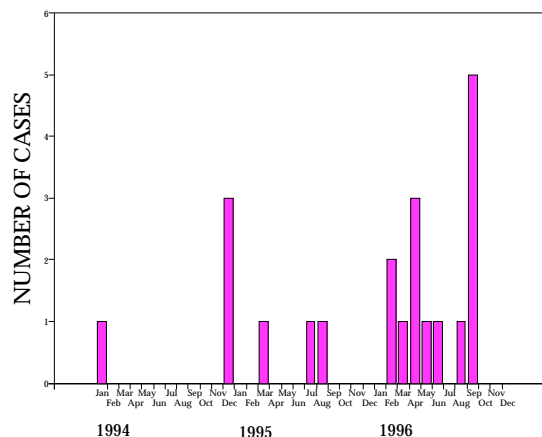
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A case of listeriosis was notified on 20 September 1996 for a patient with a haematological disease. Over the following 48 hours four further cases were reported, all in patients with immunosuppression associated with chronic disease. *Listeria monocytogenes* O1 was isolated from the blood of all cases. One case died.

Three of the five cases were inpatients at an Adelaide hospital. A fourth attended the outpatients department of the same hospital. Dietary histories showed that the three inpatients had consumed chicken sandwiches in the hospital, and all patients had eaten chicken, prior to their illness. The sandwiches were prepared in the hospital with diced chicken obtained from a commercial supplier.

Low counts of *Listeria monocytogenes* O1 were obtained from samples of the diced chicken. An investigation of the premises where the chicken was prepared was conducted. Swabs of the deboning area and samples of the chicken product also yielded *Listeria monocytogenes* O1 on culture. Further typing of the organisms from the patients and the samples of chicken by pulsed field gel electrophoresis confirmed the epidemiological link.

Figure. Listeriosis cases, South Australia, 1994 to 1996



Chicken products manufactured in the plant were withdrawn from sale and recalled on 27 September. Investigations are continuing.

Listeriosis has been a notifiable disease in South Australia since 1993. Between three and four cases were notified each year from 1993 to 1995. Fourteen cases have been notified in 1996, including the five notifications in this cluster (Figure). Cases reported earlier in the year were apparently sporadic with the possible exception of two cases associated with a medical centre. Investigations at the time did not identify a common source of infection for the two cases.