Microbial technology in practice: the good, the bad and the bugly

This year's British Society for Microbial Technology Annual Microbiology Conference will be held on 21 May at the RAF Museum in Hendon, north London, and will cover a range of different topics. Here, *Pathology in Practice* provides the first of two previews of an exciting programme that focuses on microbiology practice.

Founded in 1985, by microbiologists with a common interest in antimicrobial susceptibility testing, the British Society for Microbial Technology (BSMT) continues to promote research and development in the UK and beyond. Over the years, it has brought together a diverse community of biomedical and clinical scientists and other microbiologists who share a passion for microbiology and understanding microorganisms, and their impact on life, health and the environment.

The Society's Annual Microbiology Conference this year will return to the Royal Air Force (RAF) Museum in Hendon, North London, and offers an informative day bringing together leading experts, researchers, healthcare scientists and industry professionals to discuss the latest advances and challenges in laboratory microbial diagnostics, encouraging the exchange of information on current and future practices in clinical microbiology.

The following is an initial preview of the day's agenda, showcasing the diverse range of topics and exciting speakers featured from different fields of microbiology, including those in academia, research and clinical practice. Some excellent reasons to attend include:

- Learn something new
- Embrace new ideas
- Build your networks
- Continuing professional development (CPD)
- Develop your career
- Visit a world-class venue.

Jim Lindsay: a dedication

This year's conference is dedicated to the memory of Jim Lindsay, who helped the committee celebrate the 40th Anniversary Conference in 2025, but sadly died shortly thereafter. Jim was a founder member of the BSMT, which held its inaugural meeting in Nottingham in 1985. Jim acted as BSMT secretary for many years, retiring from the committee in 2022. He remained a staunch supporter of BSMT and the diagnostics industry, attending subsequent BSMT conferences. Members of the BSMT committee much admired Jim's intellect and knowledge, and have lost a much valued friend in addition to losing a key supporter of the Society.

Diagnostic microbiology: a potential future

A keynote presentation by Dr Sarah Pitt, a Principal Lecturer at the University of Brighton, and President of the Institute of Biomedical Science, will launch this

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year's programme. Delegates should be familiar with presentations by Dr Pitt as she played an important role in explaining aspects of virology to the general public during the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic. She has authored books on biomedical science, parasitology, and clinical microbiology, with an emphasis on laboratory practice. Her lecture, entitled the *Current state and the potential future for diagnostic microbiology*, will set the tone for the day.

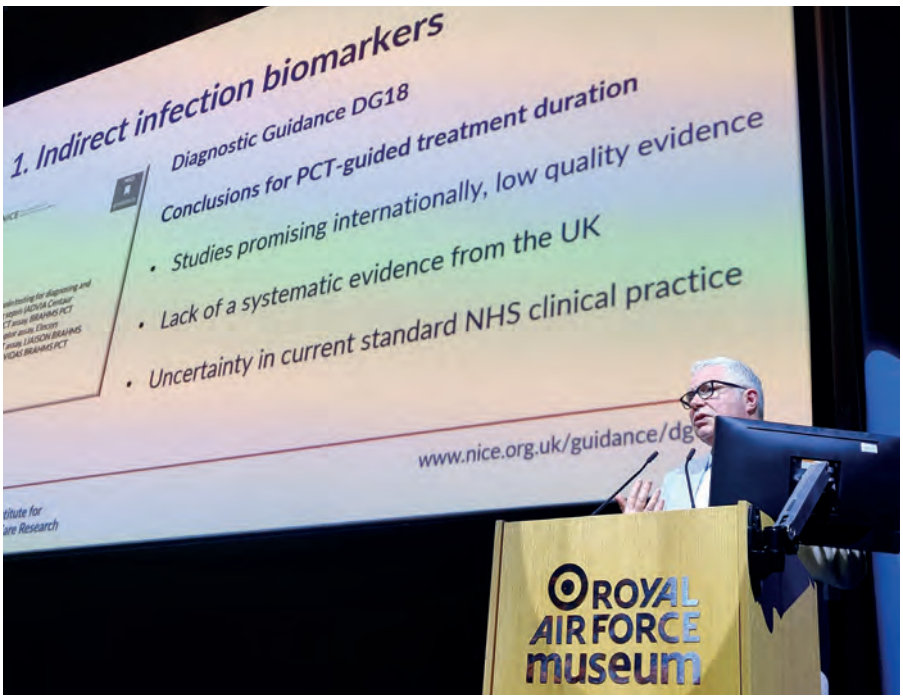
Cholera: a case of domestically acquired infection

Dr Marie Anne Chattaway currently works at the Gastrointestinal Bacteria Reference Unit (GBRU), Microbiology Services, UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA), where she is the Pathogen Lead for Salmonella Services and undertakes research in microbiology, molecular biology and evolutionary biology. Dr Chattaway is also involved in Global Health as part of the UKHSA International Health Regulations (IHR) programme in developing laboratory capacity for enteric bacterial diseases. Her talk, entitled *Holy moly! A case of domestically acquired cholera*, will showcase her particular interests and focus on current practice in microbiology.

Atypical *Mycoplasma pneumoniae*

Dr Michael Beeton leads the *Mycoplasma* and *Ureaplasma* Group at Cardiff Metropolitan University, focusing on understanding the role mycoplasmas and ureaplasmas play in human health and disease. More recently, he co-led the first prospective global surveillance study for *M. pneumoniae*, the ESGMAC *Mycoplasma pneumoniae* Surveillance (MAPS) study, which identified where and when *M. pneumoniae* returned after its absence following the implementation of non-pharmaceutical interventions in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Dr Beeton's talk, Mycoplasma pneumomiae: *atypical in many ways*, will offer an insight into his ongoing research.

Delegates will enjoy a networking lunch while also being able to engage with exhibitors in the tradeshow area, providing ample opportunities to facilitate connections between scientists and companies that offer solutions to current challenges, and the latest developments in the field.



Professor Paul Dark at the 2025 conference discussing the collaborations and innovations in microbial technology and addressing some of the most pressing issues in public health.

Mosquito vector species in the UK

With climate change having a subtle impact on weather patterns, the next presentation, entitled *The changing distribution of mosquito vector species in the UK*, will offer an insight into what entomological changes can be expected. The speaker, Dr Jolyon Medlock, has worked on vector-borne diseases for over 25 years, firstly in Africa on malaria control and lymphatic filariasis, and since 2002, at Porton Down, for UK government health agencies. He leads the Medical Entomology group advising UK government on entomological aspects of vector-borne disease risk, managing UK-wide vector surveillance systems and research on mosquito- and tick-borne disease ecology and entomology, including impacts of environmental and climatic change.

A chance to network

In addition to the opportunities available during the coffee break earlier in the day, delegates will enjoy a networking lunch while also being able to engage with exhibitors in the tradeshow area. As well as to the informative sessions, the meeting provides ample opportunities to facilitate connections between scientists and companies that offer solutions to current challenges, and the latest developments in the field.

Defending anaerobic bacteriology

In the first presentation after the lunch break, Professor Mike Wren will talk

In defence of anaerobic bacteriology: expect the unexpected. This is an apposite pairing as Mike's expertise in microbiology, and in particular anaerobic bacteriology, gained him a national and international reputation, and a recognised contribution to education saw him train thousands of biomedical scientists and junior medical staff. During his time as senior chief biomedical scientist in microbiology at University College London Hospital, and through one of the first consultant appointments of its kind in the UK, Mike subsequently was in the vanguard of IBMS members who were to become consultant biomedical scientists. Who better to explore the intricacies of this area of microbiology, for which he received an MBE for his contribution to education in biomedical science.

Phage therapy against bacterial infection

And now for the 'Bugly', and one microorganism against another. In this final presentation of the scientific programme, Professor Martha Clokie will delve into her research investigating the identification and development of bacteriophages that kill pathogens in an effort to develop new antimicrobials. Her research includes identifying specific phage combinations that can be used to destroy *Clostridioides difficile* infections while maintaining a healthy gut. As *C. difficile* causes almost two fifths of diarrhoea associated with antibiotics in the Western world, and one in 10 of patients die due to a lack of effective treatment, the use of bacteriophages could reduce the growth of *C. difficile* and simultaneously defend beneficial bacterial that are typically destroyed by antibiotics. Professor Clokie's thought-provoking presentation concludes the day's proceedings.

The programme features exciting speakers from different fields of microbiology, including those in academia, research and clinical practice

Looking to the future

The agenda for the day emphasises the essential roles of accurate diagnostic practice across various areas of microbiology. As the BSMT embarks on its fifth decade of existence, the 41st conference will serve as a reminder of its commitment to knowledge exchange in clinical laboratory practice, promoting education and supporting the next generation of biomedical and clinical scientists. The discussions and collaborations that take place during this annual event are crucial for driving forward innovations in microbial technology and addressing some of the most pressing issues in public health.

Join us on 21 May at the RAF Museum, Hendon, to be part of this platform to expand your professional network and listen to the latest developments in microbial technology. The BSMT looks forward to welcoming you.

Further details of the conference programme and information on the companies supporting this year's event will appear in the April issue of *Pathology in Practice*. In the meantime, more information on the programme, registration details, and participation, can be found on the BSMT website.

www.bsmt.org.uk