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The Associated Press

March 23, 1983, Wednesday, AM cycle

## **Fast Food Illness Traced To Rare Bacteria**

**BYLINE:** By DANIEL Q. HANEY, Associated Press Writer

**SECTION:** Domestic News

**LENGTH:** 583 words

**DATELINE:** BOSTON

A mysterious intestinal ailment that first struck diners at a fast-food chain is a new-found disease caused by a rare bacteria, and it has spread across the United States, researchers say.

Federal disease experts are seeking the source of the organism so they can wipe it out, but they fear it is becoming established in the nation's food system.

The first major outbreak appeared last year among 47 people who ate at McDonald's restaurants in Michigan and Oregon. It has since occurred among patients at a Canadian hospital, and 40 scattered cases have been reported in the United States.

The disease is hemorrhagic colitis, and it is caused by a rare form of the common bacteria E. coli. Victims have severe cramps and bloody diarrhea, and the sickness lasts from three days to more than a week.

Doctors from the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta call the ailment "a clinically distinctive gastrointestinal illness" and say it is apparently transmitted by undercooked meat.

Although the disease occurred at least once before, doctors did not recognize it as unique until after the restaurant-chain outbreak.

A report on their inquiry into the disease, directed by Dr. Lee W. Riley, was published in Thursday's New England Journal of Medicine.

"If it is a new organism, it may be producing diarrhea by some new, unrecognized mechanism," Riley said in an interview.

The first outbreak was in Medford, Ore., in February and March last year and affected 26 people who had eaten at two McDonald's. Three months later, the disease struck 21 people who were customers at two of the chain's restaurants in Traverse City, Mich.

The victims fell ill about four days after eating the hamburgers, and more than two-thirds of them were hospitalized.

From the patients' stool samples, doctors isolated a very rare form of bacteria called E. coli 0157:H7. Then they found the same bacteria in a frozen hamburger patty stored at a processing plant. The meat had been kept from a batch that was shipped to the Michigan restaurants.

Steve Leroy, a McDonald's spokesman, declined to comment on the federal report.

In the Michigan outbreak, most victims said they had eaten Big Macs, which have twice as much meat as regular hamburgers.

The illness usually begins with severe cramps, followed by diarrhea. In one typical case, the doctors wrote, "the patient initially noted small amounts of blood, but later the same day the diarrhea became grossly bloody, with bright-red blood, described as 'all blood and no stool.'" About half of the victims also have nausea or vomiting, but fever is rare.

The Canadian outbreak affected 31 patients last November at a hospital for the aged in Ottawa.

"They could not trace the source exactly, but they think it was associated with a meat product," Riley said.

The source of the 40 other U.S. cases reported in 18 states is also not clear, Riley said. "Many of them had ground beef exposure shortly before their illness. A majority of them were not exposed to any of the fast food restaurants."

The only other confirmed case of the disease was in 1975.

"It's hard to predict what's going to happen," Riley said. "If it's like any other food-borne illness, if the original source is not immediately eliminated, then it's possible that it will stay in the food cycle for a long time to come."

"If we can find the source, and the source is limited, then I think we can wipe it out," he said. "It's like trying to find a needle in a haystack."

**LANGUAGE: ENGLISH**

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The Associated Press

March 24, 1983, Thursday, PM cycle

## **Fast-Food Illness Traced To Rare Bacteria**

**BYLINE:** By DANIEL Q. HANEY, Associated Press Writer

**SECTION:** Domestic News

**LENGTH:** 415 words

**DATELINE:** BOSTON

An obscure bacteria that first sickened diners at fast-food restaurants could settle in the nation's food chain if the source of the organism isn't found soon, according to a report published today.

Doctors said the intestinal illness caused by the bacteria is a new disease that was seen only once before last year, but has now been found in 18 states.

The first major outbreak appeared last year among 47 people who ate at McDonald's restaurants in Michigan and Oregon. Since then, it has occurred among patients at a Canadian hospital, and 40 scattered cases have been reported across the United States.

The disease, hemorrhagic colitis, is caused by a rare form of the common bacteria *E. coli*. Victims have severe cramps and bloody diarrhea, and the sickness lasts from three days to more than a week. Doctors say it apparently is transmitted by undercooked meat.

A report on the investigation of the disease, directed by Dr. Lee W. Riley of the federal Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta, was published today in the *New England Journal of Medicine*.

"It's hard to predict what's going to happen," Riley said. "If it's like any other food-borne illness, if the original source is not immediately eliminated, then it's possible that it will stay in the food cycle for a long time to come."

The first outbreak was in Medford, Ore., in February and March last year and affected 26 people who had eaten at two McDonald's restaurants. Three months later, the disease struck 21 people who were customers at two of the chain's restaurants in Traverse City, Mich.

The victims fell ill about four days after eating the hamburgers, and more than two-thirds of them were hospitalized.

From the patients' stool samples, doctors isolated a very rare form of bacteria called *E. coli* 0157:H7. They found the same bacteria in a frozen hamburger patty stored at a processing plant that had sent meat to the Michigan restaurants.

Steve Leroy, a McDonald's spokesman, declined comment on the federal report.

The illness usually begins with severe cramps, followed by diarrhea. About half of the victims also have nausea or vomiting.

The source of the 40 other U.S. cases reported is not clear, Riley said, but most of the people had not eaten at fast-food restaurants.

The only other confirmed case of the disease was in 1975.

"If we can find the source, and the source is limited, then I think we can wipe it out," Riley said. "It's like trying to find a needle in a haystack."

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The Globe and Mail (Canada)

October 4, 1983 Tuesday

### **3 stricken in Calgary, burger outlets checked**

**BYLINE:** SPCL

**LENGTH:** 442 words

**DATELINE:** Calgary AB

Special to The Globe and Mail

CALGARY - Health inspectors are taking samples of hamburgers served by about 100 fast-food outlets in the Calgary area in an effort to locate germs believed to have caused kidney failure in three children.

The children, aged 2, 3 and 7, are among 13 people known to have suffered intestinal bleeding after eating hamburger cooked at home or at one of five different fast-food outlets.

Dr. Catherine Hankins, Calgary's deputy medical officer, said yesterday that people who have not eaten contaminated meat may also be affected because "it appears it can be transferred from person to person."

Samples of cooked hamburgers will be sent to provincial laboratories to see whether they contain a bacterium called E coli 0157:H7, which has only recently been linked with a rare kidney disorder known as hemolytic uremic syndrome.

The three children who suffered the disorder after eating contaminated hamburgers were placed on artificial kidney machines at the Alberta Children's Hospital, but have recovered.

Dr. Hankins said there is no proof that tainted hamburger or improper cooking is responsible for the outbreak of colitis and kidney failures, but in all 13 cases being investigated the patients had eaten hamburger at home or at restaurants shortly before the illness began.

"In recent outbreaks in Oregon and Michigan, what was implicated was undercooked hamburger meat. You need a combination of contaminated meat and undercooking. We're not clear where this comes from. E coli bacterium is common in cattle, but the 0157:H7 serotype is relatively new.

"We don't know if it comes from packing plants or from one or two cattle in a herd. The Department of Agriculture doesn't know either. This may have been happening for a long time without people reporting it."

City health inspectors, who regularly inspect sanitary conditions and food handling methods but do not normally collect samples, will be checking grill temperatures at fast-food outlets and collecting food samples for laboratory testing.

If the E coli bacterium is found in the samples, they will be sent to Ottawa or Edmonton for further testing to see if they contain the 0157:H7 serotype.

3 stricken in Calgary, burger outlets checked The Globe and Mail (Canada) October 4, 1983 Tuesday

"If the results are all negative, we won't go any farther," said John Seaborn, director of the city's health education division. "But if a large number of the bacteria are found, we will start looking at raw hamburger and packing plants and see if we can find where they come from."

Spokesmen for two large fast-food chains said yesterday that the announcement of the city inspections on Friday does not appear to have affected their business.

**LOAD-DATE:** January 24, 2007

**LANGUAGE:** ENGLISH

**PUBLICATION-TYPE:** Newspaper

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