

PulseNet Aotearoa New Zealand receives International Recognition Award.

ESR's efforts in establishing PulseNet Aotearoa New Zealand were recently recognised with the presentation in Miami of a PulseNet International Recognition Award. The global vision for PulseNet is the creation of worldwide regional networks utilising standardised identification and isolate characterisation methods and sharing information in real-time to provide early warning on foodborne disease outbreaks, emerging

foodborne infections, and acts of food bioterrorism. The award ESR received recognises both the initial steps taken to establish PulseNet methodology in New Zealand, and also contributions to the establishment of PulseNet Asia Pacific.



PulseNet Aotearoa New Zealand has been established initially focusing on the four most common notified bacterial diseases in New Zealand - *Campylobacter*, *Salmonella*, shiga-toxin producing *E. coli* (STEC) and *Listeria*. Each year there are up to 15,000 notified cases of these diseases in New Zealand, with an economic impact well in excess of \$100 million annually. For each organism the standardised PulseNet methodology for pulsed-field gel electrophoresis (PFGE) has been established at ESR, and certification with PulseNet USA completed. PFGE is a molecular fingerprinting tool that generates a barcode-like fingerprint from each isolated organism. When sick individuals contract an illness from a common source, the PFGE profiles or patterns generated from the bacteria are often the same. This information can be very useful to investigators trying to find the source of a disease outbreak, enabling them to focus on individuals with the same strain or type of bacteria, without the distraction of unrelated cases. This assists with identifying common source, and builds the case for effective interventions. PulseNet Aotearoa New Zealand is one tool that will be utilised in the redeveloped SurvINZ surveillance platform that ESR is currently investing in (see www.esr.cri.nz).

PulseNet Asia Pacific was established in 2002 and currently includes Public Health laboratories from Vietnam, Thailand, Taiwan, The Philippines, The People's Republic of China, New Zealand, Malaysia, Korea, Japan, India, Hong Kong, Bangladesh, and Australia. ESR has established for PulseNet Asia Pacific a web-based discussion forum which is being used to build communication, share methods and develop the network.

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