

Watermelon and Salmonellosis Outbreak in a Handicapped Institution

(Continued from page 19)

only a few reported food poisoning outbreaks due to *Salmonella* spp. implicating watermelon, cantaloupe, or melon (1). Gayler et al. (1993) reported that *Salmonella miami* and *Salmonella bareilly* were responsible for two salmonellosis outbreaks associated with precut wrapped watermelon. It has been shown that interior watermelon tissue could become contaminated if *Salmonella* was present either on the rind of the watermelon or on the knife used for slicing (2).

It is most likely that these watermelons were contaminated while they were sliced on a dirty cutting board. Being kept at room temperature in an already warm kitchen probably favored overgrowth of bacteria. The blending of watermelon could explain the high AR observed in this study. Blending created a contaminated homogeneous liquid whereas the slices were probably only partially contaminated on their surfaces. This could also explain why those who ate watermelon slices had a relatively longer incubation period.

Having the watermelon sliced on an unclean cutting board demonstrates how inadequate hygienic practices during food handling play a major role in food poisoning outbreaks.

These inadequate practices are repeatedly implicated in literature as important causes of food poisoning outbreak (3). The dangers are increased in food services that prepare a limited number of food items for large numbers of people. *Salmonella* can survive for long periods of time on or in foods not commonly implicated in outbreaks of salmonellosis, such as cheese and sliced fresh fruit. Relatively small doses of *Salmonella* have been shown to cause illness in an outbreak setting (4).

Meat cutting boards should never be used for preparing other food items. Routine inspection of kitchens and improved practices by food handlers is highly recommended.

References:

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outbreak of salmonellosis traced to watermelon. Public Health Rep. 70:311-13.

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3. Hargrett-been NT, Pavia AT, Tauxe RV. *Salmonella* isolates from humans in the United States, 1984-

1986. MMWR, 1986;2:25.

4. Hedberg CW, White KE, et al. An outbreak of *Salmonella enteritidis* infection at a fast-food restaurant: Implications for foodhandler-associated transmission. JID. 1991;164:1135-40

Reports from the regions

Diabetes Mellitus, Hypertension distribution and effect of mini clinics, 1998-1999

At 15 primary health care centers (PHCCs) in one sector of Riyadh, we conducted a study to identify the distribution of diabetes mellitus (DM) and hypertension (HT) and the effect of mini clinics on the proper management of patients. The data were collected from files in the chronic disease clinic over a 2-year period (1998 to 1999).

In this period, the prevalence rate per 100,000 for DM and HT increased from 2.06 to 2.3 and 1.25 to 1.34 respectively. Comparing the results of DM and HT over the 2 years, we

found a positive effect of mini clinics on the quality of care for the patients (Table 1).

We need to strengthen the role of mini clinics to provide the high quality of care given to the patients in the PHCCs. We also need to adopt effective follow-up programs and health education.

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Table 1: Data of Diabetes Mellitus and Hypertension patients, Riyadh City, 1998-1999

Year	1998		1999	
	DM	HT	DM	HT
Registered patients	3280	1591	3642	2187
Complete file data	2693	1428	3283	2091
FBS every visit*	2544	-	2680	-
BP measured 3 times**	-	1466	-	1512
Annual check-up	1816	936	2240	1433
Weight every visit	2877	1448	3247	1768
BP every visit	-	1469	-	2042
6 or more periodic visits	2012	941	1825	1164

* Fasting blood sugar (FBS) for DM patients

** Blood pressure (BP) for HT patients