

## **TB: A re-emerging problem?**

"TB: A re-emerging problem?" will be the focus for discussion at a public forum at UCC on Tuesday, November 9<sup>th</sup>. A panel of experts will discuss Tuberculosis, the recent outbreaks in the Cork and Kerry region, and modern technologies used to detect, monitor and treat the disease. Exciting new alternative strategies to control infectious diseases will also be presented.

The Forum will be chaired by Dr Mary Horgan, Consultant Physician in Infectious Diseases, Cork University Hospital with speakers Dr Dan Corcoran, Consultant Microbiologist, Cork University Hospital; Professor Mike Prentice, Medical Microbiologist, UCC & Principal Investigator, Alimentary Pharmabiotic Centre (APC) and Professor Colin Hill, UCC & Principal Investigator, APC.

Tuberculosis is mainly a chronic respiratory disease spread by coughing and sneezing. Worldwide, there are over 9 million new cases diagnosed per year. In his talk, Professor Michael Prentice will explain how advances in DNA sequencing now allow scientists to tell the difference between closely related bacteria that were previously indistinguishable. Using DNA techniques scientists can see that most of the tuberculosis bacteria that spread recently between people in Cork and Kerry are local strains persisting from the days when tuberculosis was common. DNA typing can assist with public health measures controlling the spread of tuberculosis.

TB has evolved over time and Dr Dan Corcoran will discuss this evolution and how this has impacted the disease. Active TB, when it is found, is virtually curable, but involves antibiotic treatment for at least six months. Dr Corcoran in his talk titled "Tuberculosis: the resourceful opponent" will discuss how antibiotic-resistant TB strains have emerged and the global effect of this.

Antibiotics have been the main weapon in our fight against infectious diseases for the last 60 years, saving millions of lives and turning previously fatal infections into relatively trivial problems. Unfortunately, many disease-causing bacteria have evolved to become antibiotic resistant and so many of our frontline antibiotics are now ineffective against these 'superbugs'. Professor Colin Hill in his presentation "Using microbes to PREVENT infection; an alternative to classic antibiotics?" will delve into how the APC have begun to look at alternative strategies to control infectious disease, looking to harness the power of our immune systems, and taking advantage of the many strategies used by bacteria to kill other bacteria in the environment.

This Public Forum is hosted by the Alimentary Pharmabiotic Centre, a UCC/Teagasc Research Centre funded by Science Foundation Ireland, focusing on gastrointestinal health and development of therapies for debilitating disorders such as Crohn's disease, colitis, irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) and food poisoning. (<http://apc.ucc.ie>)

The Forum will take place on Tuesday, November 9th from 7.30-9.00pm in Lecture Theatre G01, Brookfield Health Science Building, College Road, UCC. All are welcome and admission is free.

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