Notes from the Field

Clostridium perfringens Gastroenteritis Outbreak Associated with a Catered Lunch — North Carolina, November 2015

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During November 2015, the North Carolina Division of Public Health was notified by the Pitt County Health Department (PCHD) that approximately 40 persons who attended a catered company Thanksgiving lunch the previous day were ill with diarrhea and abdominal pain. The North Carolina Division of Public Health and PCHD worked together to investigate the source of illness and implement control measures. Within hours of notification, investigators attended a catered company Thanksgiving lunch the previous day and approximately 40 persons who attended the lunch were ill. The North Carolina Division of Public Health was notified by the Pitt County Health Department that approximately 40 persons who attended the event were ill with diarrhea and abdominal pain. The North Carolina Division of Public Health and PCHD worked together to investigate the source of illness and implement control measures. Within hours of notification, investigators attended a catered company Thanksgiving lunch the previous day and approximately 40 persons who attended the lunch were ill.

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C. perfringens enterotoxin (CPE) using reversed passive latex agglutination. Stool culture and enumeration of C. perfringens colony forming units (CFU) were performed for five samples of foods implicated by the epidemiologic investigation (one stuffing sample and four turkey samples). Because meat is the most common source of C. perfringens outbreaks (1), one

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These findings confirm the need for commercial food preparers to adhere to existing food safety regulations (4), including use of permitted facilities and having a certified kitchen manager on staff. Caterers should be aware of the risks associated with improper storage of prepared food for long periods and the importance of temperature monitoring and regulation during food preparation and handling.

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References