



Special Section on the Third International *E. coli* and the Mucosal Immune System (ECMIS) Symposium

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KEYWORDS *Escherichia coli*, gastrointestinal disease, meeting review, gastrointestinal infection

Escherichia coli represents a diverse species encompassing strains that colonize the intestinal tract as commensals, that cause diseases within and outside of the digestive system, and that promote gastrointestinal health. For some *E. coli*-associated diseases of the intestinal tract, there are commonalities between symptoms and virulence factors required for human and animal illnesses, highlighting how research from one field can inform therapeutic and vaccine development in another.

This issue of *Applied and Environmental Microbiology* contains a special section of papers from the 2019 *E. coli* and the Mucosal Immune System (ECMIS) Symposium, held at the University of Ghent, Belgium, from June 2 to 5. This represented the third such conference. While the first (in 2011) and second (in 2015) focused on differences in infections between species and distinct mechanisms of *E. coli* pathogens, respectively, the most recent conference addressed how the host, pathogen, and environment impact disease occurrence and progression and how to exploit these factors to control infections.

The meeting was directed by Eric Cox with the assistance of Bert Devriendt, Herman Favoreel, and Daisy Vanrompay, all from the University of Ghent, and an international scientific steering committee. This was an exciting gathering of 79 scientists presenting 13 keynote lectures, 14 additional oral presentations, and 16 posters. Opportunities to explore the historic Flemish city of Ghent and nearby Bruges, and a symposium dinner at the Thagaste monastery, provided abundant opportunities for networking and left all participants looking forward to a future fourth meeting.

Citation Dudley EG. 2020. Special section on the Third International *E. coli* and the Mucosal Immune System (ECMIS) Symposium. *Appl Environ Microbiol* 86:e02426-20. <https://doi.org/10.1128/AEM.02426-20>.

Editor Harold L. Drake, University of Bayreuth

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Published 24 November 2020