



International Scientific Forum on Home Hygiene (www.ifh-homehygiene.org)

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Are we too clean? Reframing the hygiene hypothesis and its implications for the human microbiome, allergies, infectious disease and our lifestyles



The International Scientific Forum on Home Hygiene (IFH) in partnership with the Royal Society of Public Health (RSPH) are hosting a 1 day conference in London on Thursday, February 11th 2016

Allergies are on the rise; hay fever and eczema have tripled in the last 30 years. At the same time, threats of global infectious disease pandemics, antibiotic resistance and the numbers of immune-compromised people living in the community have increased. It is now accepted that changed interaction with our microbial world has increased our risk of developing allergies, but most experts agree that the hygiene hypothesis is a misnomer. Use of the term “hygiene” hypothesis continues to undermine attitudes to hygiene and hinder progress in understanding how to tackle these serious but interlinked public health issues at a critical time when antibiotic resistance threatens our ability to treat infectious disease.

Unclear information and overgeneralization has resulted in the public losing confidence in hygiene and cleanliness. In reality a whole range of lifestyle and environmental factors have changed exposure to microbes including sanitation, social contact, exposure to the outdoors – and overuse of antibiotics. We aren't too clean or overdoing hygiene but we now lack exposure to some vital microbes. So what are the prospects for tackling the problem and how can get the message across?

Chaired by Dr Rosalind Stanwell-Smith and Professor Sally Bloomfield, this event will explore new evidence about the nature of the link between microbial exposure and allergies, and will focus on what industry, healthcare and health agencies can do to change perceptions and develop effective strategies.

Our speakers will look at why hygiene and cleanliness remain so important and how we might develop win-win approaches that minimise risk of infection whilst optimising exposure to the microbes we need. Hand hygiene is just one area in which science and behaviour

change programmes can work together to fulfil both roles. We will also look at the role of hygiene in tackling the problem of antibiotic resistance

Programme

Session 1 The burden of infectious and allergic diseases

The rise of allergies in the 20th century – a review, Dr Adam Fox, Consultant Paediatric Allergist at Guy's and St Thomas' Hospitals, London, and Honorary Senior Lecturer in Paediatric Allergy at King's College London.

Why is hygiene still so important? Professor Lisa Ackerley, Visiting Professor of Environmental Health, University of Salford

Session 2 Allergies and microbial exposure

From hygiene hypothesis to the Old Friends mechanism – understanding the role of microbe exposure in reducing the risks of allergic diseases, Professor Graham Rook, Centre for Clinical Microbiology, Department of Infection, University College, University of London

What are the likely causes of our loss of exposure to microbes, Professor Sally Bloomfield, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine; International Scientific Forum on Home Hygiene

Session 3 Tackling the paradox – How can we reduce the risks of developing allergy and the risks of infectious diseases at the same time

What measures are being researched to reverse the trends in allergy (and other inflammatory diseases), Professor Fergus Shanahan, Chair of the Department of Medicine, University College Cork (UCC), Ireland

Developing and promoting a targeted approach to hygiene in home and everyday life, Professor Elizabeth Scott, Associate Professor of Biology, Co-Director of the Center for Hygiene and Health, Department of Biology, Simmons College, Boston, MA, USA.

Achieving Hygiene behaviour Change. How can we do it? Speaker tbc

For more details and booking form, go to: <https://www.rsph.org.uk/en/courses-conferences-and-events/index.cfm/are-we-too-clean-reframing-the-hygiene-hypothesis>