

## SGM Membership Subscriptions 2001

The following rates were agreed at the AGM of the Society on 13 September 2000.

Ordinary Member	£	US\$
■ Membership subscription (including <i>Microbiology Today</i> )	40.00	70.00
Additional concessionary subscriptions for publications:		
■ <i>Microbiology</i>	70.00	135.00
■ <i>Journal of General Virology</i>	70.00	135.00
■ <i>Int J Syst Evol Microbiol</i>	70.00	135.00
Student or Retired Member	£	US\$
■ Membership subscription (including <i>Microbiology Today</i> )	20.00	33.00
Additional concessionary subscriptions for publications:		
■ <i>Microbiology</i>	35.00	65.00
■ <i>Journal of General Virology</i>	35.00	65.00
■ <i>Int J Syst Evol Microbiol</i>	70.00	135.00
Undergraduate Member (UK and Republic of Ireland)	£	US\$
■ Membership subscription (including <i>Microbiology Today</i> )	10.00	NA
No concessionary subscriptions to journals are available to Undergraduate Members		

Members are reminded that their 2001 subscriptions are due for payment by 1 December 2000.

As in previous years, no journal or meetings information will be despatched to members who are in arrears, and there will be no guarantee of provision of back numbers of journals for members who pay their subscription late.

### Payment by direct debit or continuous credit card

Subscription notices were despatched recently to all members paying by direct debit or by continuous credit card arrangement. To continue your present status and journal requirements, no further action is necessary. However, if you pay by continuous credit card, you should check that the card number and expiry date on the subscription notice are correct. To change your

membership status or journal requirements for 2001, or your credit card details, you should have amended your subscription notice and returned it to the membership office by 15 November 2000. However, if you have missed this deadline, your amended notice will be accepted if it is submitted immediately.

### Payment against invoice

Invoices were despatched recently to all members who pay by this method. If you did not receive one, please inform the Membership Office.

### Subscriptions waived for unemployed members

As in previous years, subscriptions may be waived at the discretion of the Society for unemployed members under the age of 35 who are resident in the UK. If you are eligible and wish to benefit in this way in

2001, you should send a signed statement that you are currently unemployed to the Membership Office before 30 November 2000. (Please note that no increase in journal requirements will be permitted.)

### Income tax relief on membership subscriptions

Members who are liable for UK income tax are reminded that their annual subscriptions to the Society have been approved by the Inland Revenue as qualifying for income tax relief. Any member who would like further information or has difficulty in obtaining this relief should contact the Executive Secretary.

## Going Public round-up

### Popular poster competition

This year the Institute for Animal Health and BBSRC ran a competition in which primary and secondary pupils were required to design a poster to celebrate the work of Alexander Fleming in discovering antibiotics. The quality of the 900+ entries was high and the judging, assisted by SGM representative John Grainger, proved difficult. The final choice of winners was based on the accuracy of the information and an eye-catching presentation. The winning school in each category received £400 and the top competition entries were displayed in the BBSRC pavilion at the Royal Show.

### SGM hits the road

External Relations Office staff have been busy this year. Events presented or attended include:

- Edinburgh International Science Festival – public symposium on vaccination and children's workshops
- SGM Warwick University meeting – public debate *Infectious disease – will we ever win?*
- Springboard Careers Day at Wembley Conference Centre
- Directions Careers Fair at Earl's Court
- Association for Science Education Area Meetings – microbiology workshops
- British Association Creating Sparks – BAYS Day microbiology workshops

### Want to spread the word about science?

Science Line, the service which responds to telephone questions about science from the general public, is looking for more experts to provide the answers. When the folk who man the lines are stumped, they have to seek help. This merely involves emailing or calling the appropriate expert and asking them for information. The answers are passed on to callers without revealing the sources – contact details of experts on the Science Line database are confidential and never given to callers or the media. About one-third of the questions are about astronomy or physics, one-third biological and one-third all the rest.

If you would like to help, fill in the expert form on the website at [www.sciencenet.org.uk](http://www.sciencenet.org.uk), or send an email to [scienceline@bss.org](mailto:scienceline@bss.org) or telephone 020 8735 5015.

### A Wellcome prize

The Wellcome Trust invites professional life scientists who have had no popular science books published to date to enter their latest competition. £25,000 is up for grabs towards the cost of writing a popular science book. The aim is to write an important or influential book that will not only inspire, stimulate and inform the general lay reader, but will also open up new ways of thinking about the world and set the agenda for future debate and discussion. The closing date for submissions is 2 March 2001. Further information, the rules and guidelines can be found at [www.wellcome.ac.uk](http://www.wellcome.ac.uk)

# Going Public

## Bugs, microbes and micro-organisms

Reg England

A Microbiology Summer School for 11–16-year-old pupils from local secondary schools was held between 24 and 27 July 2000 at the University of Central Lancashire in Preston. The workshop was run by Reg England, Chris Hughes, Gill Ward and Jon Rand. The hands-on programme introduced pupils to 'the good-guys' – microbes used in food production; 'the bad guys' – microbes that cause a problem in food poisoning and health; and 'the downright ugly' – microbes found on our bodies!

At the start of the first practical exercise, pupils were presented with a menu and invited to taste various 'microbial' foods and drink (bread, Quorn™ sausages, sauerkraut, yoghurt and cheeses, all washed down with lemonade). The pupils were then allowed to look at pre-prepared plate cultures and viewed slides of the relevant microbe(s) involved. The fungal plates, in particular *Fusarium graminearum*, *Penicillium raquefortii* and *Aspergillus niger* were met with shrieks of disgust at what they had just consumed. The pupils drew each microbe (plate and slide culture) in a specially designed workbook and a prize was awarded for the best drawings. Mid-way through the first session we were joined by BBC Radio Lancashire. The reporter interviewed a few pupils, and listening to the article on the radio the following day, we are pleased to report that microbiology received a very good press from the kids.

Pupils were then introduced to microbes about their body by taking swabs from various parts of their anatomy! They streaked the swabs onto different agar media, sealed the plates with parafilm and came back the next day to see what had been caught. A similar exercise was held by asking them to place their fingers, before and after washing with soap, onto nutrient agar plates.

The following day, pupils looked at the sealed plates and were able to identify whether they had grown bacteria, yeasts or fungi by referring to a simple key in their workbook. The kids were very surprised to see the diversity and numbers of bacteria that grew on their skin. Pupils drew chosen examples of their 'body bugs' in their workbook. Each agar plate from the finger exercise was photographed using a digital camera and a colour printout was given to pupils to include in their workbook before they went home (something to show Mum and Dad).

### Safe practice

This work was carried out by trained microbiologists in a university laboratory. Anyone considering organizing microbiological investigations for school students should carry out a risk assessment first. It should also be noted that in secondary schools pupils aged 11–16 may carry out L2 work (see *Safety in Science Education*, HMSO, 1996) but the document states that '*organisms may be cultured from the environment but not from environments which are likely to contain harmful organisms, for example lavatory seats or body surfaces other than fingers or hands*'. It is also recommended that culture plates are not incubated above room temperature.

The SGM External Relations Office is always pleased to give advice and has produced a factsheet on safety and GLP in schools. Email [education@sgm.ac.uk](mailto:education@sgm.ac.uk) or see the website [www.sgm.ac.uk](http://www.sgm.ac.uk)



The pupils then carried out Gram stains on selected 'friendly body bugs' taken from their swab plates and/or finger plates. Whoops of delight/horror were heard when they looked at the stained bugs under  $\times 400$  magnification. A few selected examples of their 'body bugs' were shown on the TV screens, linked to a Nikon microscope via a video set-up. The pupils could see each other's bugs! The hands-on element finished with the pupils looking at prepared slides of a few 'bad guys' (*Escherichia coli*, *Staphylococcus aureus*, *Streptococcus pyogenes* and *Streptococcus mutans*) down a microscope.

The workshop closed by having a few minutes chat about what they had seen and learnt in each workshop exercise, followed by prize-giving. In addition, all pupils went away with a set of SGM posters about *Microbes in Food* and several informative leaflets (many thanks to Janet for providing them at such short notice). The general opinion was that everyone (us included) had a fun time.

More photos can be seen on our microbiology website [www.uclan.ac.uk/micro](http://www.uclan.ac.uk/micro)

● Reg England is former Convener of the SGM Fermentation & Bioprocessing Group. He is based at the Department of Biological Sciences, University of Central Lancashire, Corporation Street, Preston PR1 2HE. Tel. 01772 893513; email [r.England@uclan.ac.uk](mailto:r.England@uclan.ac.uk)

ABOVE:  
Pupils Gram staining their 'body bugs' (upper), Gill and Jon looking on, and looking at slide and plate cultures of 'microbial foods' (lower).  
COURTESY REG ENGLAND