

2014 FDA Food Safety Challenge

Judges

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JUDGES

Beilei Ge, Ph.D.

Research Microbiologist
Center for Veterinary Medicine, Office of Research (CVM/OR)
US Food and Drug Administration

Dr. Ge is leading a research program on feed safety microbiology. Her research includes: developing rapid, sensitive, and specific molecular detection assays for foodborne pathogens, particularly *Salmonella* in animal feed and pet food commodities; conducting surveillance studies to characterize the contamination levels, genotypes, and antimicrobial susceptibility profiles of foodborne pathogens and indicator organisms in animal feed and pet food; and investigating the development and mechanisms of antimicrobial resistance in foodborne pathogens.

Dr. Ge joined the FDA in September 2011 from Louisiana State University, where she developed a nationally-recognized research program in food safety microbiology including rapid method development, food surveys, and antimicrobial resistance studies.

Darcy Hanes, Ph.D.

Research Microbiologist
Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition (CFSAN)
US Food and Drug Administration

Dr. Hanes is a research microbiologist in the Division of Virulence Assessment, Office of Applied Nutrition, CFSAN. Dr. Hanes leads a research team developing methods for the isolation, identification and molecular characterization of *Salmonella enterica*. She sits on number committees within CFSAN that deal with research priorities including method development and validation.

Dr. Hanes obtained her undergraduate degree in Biology from St. Bonaventure University and her

doctoral degree in microbiology from the State University of New York at Buffalo. She joined the FDA in 1988 and in 1990 became a Commissioned Officer in the United States Public Health Service (PHS).

Tom Hammack, M.S.

Chief, Microbial Method Development Branch
Center of Food Safety and Applied Nutrition (CFSAN), Office of Regulatory Science
US Food and Drug Administration

Mr. Hammack has served as Chief of the Microbial Methods Development Branch of CFSAN's Division of Microbiology since 2009. He is a co-author of The FDA's Bacteriological Analytical Manual's *Salmonella* and Food Sampling and Preparation of Sample Homogenate chapters. He also serves as the Chair of the BAM Council. His research has been concentrated on the development and validation of cultural methods for the detection and isolation of *Salmonella* from foods, focusing on fruits and vegetables.

Mr. Hammack also has an interest in food microbiology methods validation. Since 2004, he has served as a General Referee for food microbiology for AOAC International, where he oversees the validation of numerous microbiological methods for bacterial pathogens. AOAC validated methods are used by the FDA and commercial laboratories for the detection of pathogens in foods.

Donna Williams-Hill, Ph.D.

Microbiology Branch Director
Pacific Regional Laboratory Southwest (PRLSW), Office of Regulatory Affairs (ORA)
US Food and Drug Administration

Dr. Williams-Hill is the Microbiology Branch Director of FDA PRLSW and is a member of numerous FDA and Food Emergency Response Network (FERN) working groups focusing on methods development and procedures. Her work centers on the detection and characterization of food pathogens and select agents in foods. Dr. Williams-Hill joined the FDA in 2000 and has extensive laboratory experience in the study of biological systems ranging from the bacteriophage to the whole animal.

Dr. Williams-Hill is a part-time instructor in Microbiology at the University of Southern California and Chapman, where she previously was an assistant professor in the Department of Radiation Oncology.

Guodong Zhang, Ph.D.

Research Microbiologist
Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition (CFSAN)
US Food and Drug Administration

Dr. Guodong Zhang is currently a research microbiologist at the FDA. He is working on both culture and molecular method development and validation procedures for the isolation, detection and identification of foodborne pathogens. Dr. Zhang has published over 70 research papers and book chapters and has a patent for the use of probiotics in the control of *Salmonella* and *Campylobacter* in poultry.

Prior to his time with the FDA, Dr. Zhang was a professor at Northeast Agricultural University of China, a visiting associate professor at Purdue, and worked on foodborne pathogens and probiotic bacteria with the CDC and The University of Georgia.

Patricia Fields, Ph.D.

Associate Director for Laboratory Science
Division of Foodborne, Waterborne, and Environmental Diseases (DFWED)
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Dr. Fields is the Associate Director for Laboratory Science in the Division of Foodborne, Waterborne, and Environmental Diseases (DFWED) and the chief of the Salmonella Reference Unit in the Enteric Diseases Laboratory Branch, DFWED at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta, Georgia. She has a PhD in Microbiology and did postdoctoral research in *Salmonella* pathogenesis before joining the CDC, where she worked in several areas before returning to *Salmonella* and foodborne and diarrheal diseases.

In addition to her role overseeing reference diagnostic services for *Salmonella*, Dr. Fields' research focuses on development of improved molecular diagnostic and subtyping methods for *Salmonella*, in particular the development of DNA-based methods for the determination of serotype. She also has an interest in understanding the subtleties of virulence differences among nontyphoidal serotypes of *Salmonella* in the current era of comparative genomics.

John Johnston, Ph.D., MBA

Scientific Liaison
Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS)
USDA

As the chair of the FSIS Research Priorities Review Panel, Dr. Johnston leads USDA's efforts to identify and prioritize FSIS data needs and research that will fill these needs. Dr. Johnston communicates these food safety research priorities to stakeholders and customers via the FSIS website, presentations at scientific meetings and face-to-face meetings with government, university and industry researchers and research program leaders. He has initiated multiple agreements with government food safety agencies and universities to facilitate research on meat and poultry and food safety hazards isolated from these products.

Dr. Johnston's previous positions with the USDA include Senior Risk Analyst, Chemistry Research Project Leader, and Mass Spectrometry Specialist. He is the past chair of the Division of Agrochemicals, American Chemical Society and is currently active in the Committee for Chemists with Disabilities.