Disease outbreaks

Oregon state and local health departments investigated a record number (231) of communicable disease outbreaks in 2007. The majority (120) of these were person-to-person transmissions of norovirus causing gastroenteritis in the elder inhabitants of Oregon’s assisted and long-term care facilities, or younger populations in restricted environments such as the state hospital or prison. However, there were a number of outbreaks of other bacterial and viral pathogens. Sharing of respiratory secretions caused clusters of influenza (3), pertussis (4), meningococcal disease (2) and adenovirus (2). Thirty-nine outbreaks of foodborne transmission were identified. Foods contaminated with a garden variety of *Salmonella* made folks ill at a variety of venues including restaurants, markets and fairs. Every outbreak reinforces the age-old public health mantras — “wash your hands” and “cover your cough.”