Consumer Awareness of Campylobacter in the United Kingdom

Ellen W. Evans¹, Robert Bowler², Simon Dawson² and David C. Lloyd¹

¹ZERO2FIVE Food Industry Centre, Cardiff Metropolitan University, Cardiff, Wales, United Kingdom.
²Cardiff School of Sport and Health Sciences, Cardiff Metropolitan University, Cardiff, Wales, United Kingdom.

Corresponding author: evans@cardiffmet.ac.uk

Introduction

Campylobacter is the most common cause of foodborne illness in the United Kingdom (UK), with an estimated economic cost of £600 million and causes 100 deaths annually.³

Poor food-safety practices by consumers in the domestic environment are believed to be a common cause of Campylobacteriosis.² It is reported that 37% of foodborne illness outbreaks in the European Union were thought to originate in the home.¹ However, due to under-reporting of mild foodborne illnesses, it is estimated the true percentage of incidence originating in the home is likely to be higher than reported.³

To reduce the risks associated with Campylobacteriosis in the domestic environment, consumers need to implement risk-reducing behaviours. Purpose

The purpose of the study was to investigate knowledge of Campylobacter and determine self-reported domestic food-safety practices associated with the risk of Campylobacteriosis among consumers in the UK.

Methods

Self-complete questionnaires: An online self-complete questionnaire to determine consumer food-safety knowledge, attitudes and self-reported practices. The survey was distributed via Social media (twitter and facebook) was completed by UK consumers (n=183).

Ethical Approval: Approval was obtained from the Health Care and Policy Research Ethics Committee of the Cardiff University School of Health and Social Care.

Results

A total of 183 UK consumers completed the questionnaire. Of the complete sample, 79% were female. The majority (41%) were employed full time, 24% were employed part time, 14% were students and 13% were unemployed. The purpose of the study was to investigate knowledge of Campylobacter and determine self-reported domestic food-safety practices associated with the risk of Campylobacteriosis among consumers in the UK.

Awareness of Campylobacter

The majority (99%) were aware Campylobacter was a bacterium, and 62% indicated awareness that Campylobacter was associated with raw chicken (Figure 1).

Self-reported food safety practices

Cooking chicken thoroughly

Although predominantly associated with raw chicken, 7% associated the pathogen with unpasteurised milk, as during the data collection phase (December 2016) an ongoing UK outbreak of Campylobacteriosis was linked to unpasteurised milk (Figure 2).

Adhering to use by dates

Although predominantly associated with raw chicken, 7% associated the pathogen with unpasteurised milk, as during the data collection phase (December 2016) an ongoing UK outbreak of Campylobacteriosis was linked to unpasteurised milk (Figure 2).

Perceptions of foodborne illness

The home was perceived to be the most common location for foodborne illness (69%) (Figure 8).

Significance of study

• Although findings indicate public awareness regarding Campylobacter, food-safety malpractices were reported. However, it must be considered that self-reported data may not equate to consumer behaviour.

• Therefore, behavioural studies to observe consumer food-safety practices in the domestic environment relating to Campylobacter risk-reducing behaviours are required.

• Further studies are needed to investigate why consumers fail to adhere to recommended domestic food-safety practices.

Acknowledgements

The researchers wish to acknowledge the consumers that completed the questionnaire.

References

1. Food Standards Agency. 2018. Campylobacter: [Online Available at: https://www.food.gov.uk/safety-information/foodborne-diseases/campylobacter].

Acknowledgements

All posters from the ZERO2FIVE Food Industry Centre are available for download from: www.cardiffmet.ac.uk/health/zero2five/research

Download from: www.cardiffmet.ac.uk/health/zero2five/research

Handouts

All posters from the ZERO2FIVE Food Industry Centre are available for download from: www.cardiffmet.ac.uk/health/zero2five/research