

MRSA ACTION UK
Welcomes Professor Hugh Pennington as our President



Professor Pennington MBBS, PhD, DSc, FRCPath, FRCP (Edin) FMedSci, FRSE, graduated in medicine with honours from St Thomas's Hospital Medical School in 1962 and gained his PhD in 1967. After occupying various posts at St Thomas's, he spent a year at the University of Wisconsin before moving in 1969 to the Institute of Virology in Glasgow. His research there was on vaccines and smallpox viruses, the hepatitis B virus and the influenza virus and its relatives. In 1979 he was appointed to the Chair of Bacteriology at the University of Aberdeen, a post he held until he retired with emeritus status in 2003. His research in Aberdeen focused on the development of new and improved typing ('fingerprinting') methods for bacteria.

Professor Pennington is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh and the Academy of Medical Sciences, and has received honorary DSc degrees from the Universities of Lancaster, Strathclyde and Aberdeen. He chaired the Pennington Group enquiry for the Secretary of State for Scotland into the 1996 outbreak of E.coli O157 infection in central Scotland. He has also played an important advisory role in various organisations, including the Scottish Food Advisory Committee of the Food Standards Agency and the World Food Programme Technical Advisory Group, as well as acting as Vice Chair of the Broadcasting Council for Scotland (advising the BBC). Over the last few years Professor Pennington has written widely on a number of subjects. These include a commentary on the SARs outbreak in 2002, BSE ('mad cow disease'), smallpox and anthrax and its potential use in bio-terrorism. He has also written a book, *When Food Kills*, published by Oxford University Press in 2003.

Since retiring in 2003 Professor Pennington held the post of President of the Society for General Microbiology (SGM) for over three years and has been regularly contributing articles to the *London Review of Books*.

We have the highest regard for Professor Pennington; he has championed the cause in reducing healthcare infections and made his views well known on the regulation within the healthcare environment and the numbers game being played by Government in his acclaimed article "Don't Pick Your Nose".

"The number of MRSA bacteraemias is a surrogate measure for non-trivial infections. Reducing them by half means the same for lethality. Even if this target is achieved MRSA will still be killing more people than all the microbial causes of food poisoning put together. A slaughterman killing a cow and preparing its carcass for the butcher is far more regulated by the Meat Hygiene Service, by the official veterinary surgeon, and by lots of rules with penalties for infringement than anyone handling the living in a hospital. European Commission inspectors can call at an abattoir at any time. Hospital infection control has no equivalents. Abattoirs are probably over-regulated. The same cannot be said for hospitals."

We welcome and look forward to working with Professor Pennington.