GLOSSARY

Adherence (adhesion, attachment): The process by which bacteria stick to the surfaces of host cells. Once bacteria have entered the body, adherence is a major initial step in the infection process. The terms adherence, adhesion, and attachment are often used interchangeably.

Carrier: A person or animal with asymptomatic infection that can be transmitted to another susceptible person or animal.

Infection: Multiplication of an infectious agent within the body. Multiplication of the bacteria that are part of the normal flora of the gastrointestinal tract, skin, etc, is generally not considered an infection; on the other hand, multiplication of pathogenic bacteria (e.g., Salmonella species)—even if the person is asymptomatic—is deemed an infection.

Invasion: The process whereby bacteria, animal parasites, fungi, and viruses enter host cells or tissues and spread in the body.

Nonpathogen: A microorganism that does not cause disease; may be part of the normal flora.

Opportunistic pathogen: An agent capable of causing disease only when the host’s resistance is impaired (i.e., when the patient is “immunocompromised”).

Pathogen: A microorganism capable of causing disease.

Pathogenicity: The ability of an infectious agent to cause disease. (See also virulence.)

Toxigenicity: The ability of a microorganism to produce a toxin that contributes to the development of disease.

Virulence: The quantitative ability of an agent to cause disease. Virulent agents cause disease when introduced into the host in small numbers. Virulence involves adherence, invasion, and toxigenicity (see above).