

# Vibrio parahaemolyticus infections and algal intoxications as emergent public health problems in Chile

## Infecciones por *Vibrio parahaemolyticus* e intoxicaciones por algas: Problemas emergentes de salud pública en Chile

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There is interest in the paradigm that relates environmental sea changes to the emergence of diseases that affect both aquatic organisms in the sea and human beings. The emergence of *Vibrio parahaemolyticus* as an important cause of epidemic summer diarrhea in 2004 and 2005, confined mainly to the tenth region in Chile, could be a manifestation of this trend. This and other areas of the country have also experienced several outbreaks of paralytic shellfish poisoning (PSP), diarrheal shellfish poisoning (DSP) and amnesic shellfish poisoning (ASP) caused by harmful algal blooms (HAB) of *Alexandrium catenella*, *Dinophysis acuta* and *Pseudonitzschia* species, respectively. The short historical record of these pathological phenomena in Chile suggests that they are increasing in frequency and expanding their geographical range. The *V. parahaemolyticus* isolates responsible for the Chilean outbreaks correspond mainly to the pandemic strain O3:K6. HAB found in Chile and the intoxications caused by th