Background
Recent advances in nucleic acid diagnostic methods have revolutionized microbiology by 
facilitating rapid, sensitive microbial surveillance and differential diagnosis of infectious 
diseases. Implementation of these methods may enable intervention when the prognosis 
is optimal for limiting replication, dissemination, transmission, morbidity and mortality. It 
may also reveal unappreciated links between infection and chronic diseases. In this 
lecture I will discuss mechanisms of microbial pathogenesis, routes to proving 
causation, and a staged strategy for surveillance and discovery. In reviewing the 
strengths and limitations of various analytical platforms, I will provide examples that 
illustrate how each platform can be used to investigate clinical problems.

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