INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMME ON CHEMICAL SAFETY

Conclusions and Recommendations

Workshop on the Collection, Reporting and Use of Human Data

25-27 February 2004, Cardiff, UK
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

BACKGROUND

1. This document provides a summary of the conclusions and recommendations from a Workshop held to discuss the potential for the collection, reporting and use of human data from three inter-related activities: poisons information, prevention and management; chemical incident alert and response and the risk assessment of chemicals. These activities form the core of the International Programme on Chemical Safety (IPCS) the over-arching goals of which are to establish the scientific basis for the assessment of risks to human health and the environment from exposures to chemicals and to provide technical assistance in strengthening national capacities for the sound management of chemicals.

2. The Workshop was set in the context of the invitation from the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety (Bangkok, November 2003) that IPCS should take the international lead in the development of guidance on, and mechanisms for collecting, disseminating and utilizing clinical and exposure data from human observations. The resolutions of the World Health Assembly to strengthen systems for chemicals surveillance, emergency preparedness and response (WHA 55.16, 2002), its decision to revise the International Health Regulations to include chemical events of international concern (WHA 56.28, 2003) and its encouragement of Member States to take full account of the health aspects of chemical safety in further development of the strategic approach to international chemicals management (WHA 56.22, 2003) also provided important reasons to explore linkages in the three areas of IPCS work.

OBJECTIVES

3. The specific objectives of the workshop were to increase awareness and understanding of IPCS work in the areas of human data collection and use, poisons centre development and chemical incident alert, surveillance and response, to identify and develop proposals for building strategic alliances and mechanisms to both strengthen these activities and to propose specific targets for work that can be further considered in the developing IPCS Workplans for the next biennium and beyond. Annex 1 provides the adopted agenda for the Workshop.

4. The meeting was organized together with the WHO Collaborating Centre for Public Health Management of Chemical Incidents, the UK Health Protection Agency and the Cardiff Centre of the UK National Poisons Information Service. The meeting was co-chaired by Professor Gary Coleman and Professor Jim Bridges and involved 28 participants with expertise in risk assessment, poisons centre operations, clinical treatment of poisoning, occupational health and safety, public health surveillance and
chemical incident preparedness and response. Annex 2 provides a list of participants.

5. In plenary the Workshop reviewed and discussed the current work of the IPCS and also nine case studies. These case studies illustrated some of the issues in the use of human data and work underway in several regions of the world to examine new ways of collecting and using existing human data. Specifically, participants heard and considered the views of the use of human data in risk assessment from the European chemical industry association, ECETOC, following an international workshop organized by ECETOC to discuss this topic and a survey being undertaken of chemicals assessment bodies. A report was given about the development of a chemicals-related component of the WHO Global Outbreak, Alert and Response Network and some of the lessons learnt from recent chemical incidents including those in China. A multi-hospital research project was presented for collecting different types of human data in Japan. The current activities and future perspectives of the European Environment Agency in establishing monitoring networks were discussed together with their links to public health actions. The work of the European Commission (DG SANCO) in working with poisons centres to establish a surveillance system on chemical intoxications and work underway in the US to develop strategic links with poisons centres to improve chemicals surveillance were reviewed. Finally the workshop heard of the objectives of newly formed UK Health Protection Agency and its work to provide more integrated public health actions.

6. Break-out or syndicate groups focussed on sources of human data being routinely collected by poisons information and treatment centres and the potential for improvements in the future particularly to strengthen the basis of risk assessment work and for chemical incident alert, response and follow-up.

7. A full summary of the Workshop is being prepared which will provide more information on each of the case studies and information and recommendations from the syndicate groups. The specific recommendations from each of the syndicate groups will be integrated to form the basis of an action plan for further discussion. While this is being completed the overall conclusions and recommendations of the Workshop are provided below.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8. There are substantial public health benefits from more effective collection, recording, sharing and use of human effects and exposure data. However this potential has not been exploited and needs to be improved to further protect public health.

9. Many organizations are involved in the collection and recording of human data but these are largely uncoordinated even within countries. An action plan to establish a more coordinated approach should be developed together with the means for implementation and support.

10. Important sources for human data are poisoning and chemical incidents but other important sources of exposure and outcome data exist (e.g. from occupational and environmental settings). These additional sources also need to be considered in the development of more coordinated and integrated approaches.
11. Although the focus of poisoning and chemical incident information is acute data it is recognized that they have the potential to generate valuable information on longer-term effects and situations which are often not subject of routine toxicity testing for risk assessment particularly if adequate follow-up takes place.

12. A sustained, collective and coordinated effort will be needed by experts involved in poisons centres, chemical incident centres and risk assessment authorities to strengthen existing and develop new mechanisms for collecting, reporting and using human data.

13. Dynamic, positive sustainable interactions between data gatherers and users are needed on an ongoing basis to fully realize the benefits of use of human data. The benefits to both data gatherers and users must be clearly expressed, demonstrated and promoted.

14. For optimal use of human data common procedures need to be established for data collection and recording. In the first instance and because of the resources, mechanisms and infrastructures required, such procedures should be developed and tested for carefully selected chemicals and/or situations of concern. The matrix describing data needs for risk assessment, developed as one of the break-out or syndicate activities should be completed and validated as far as possible.

15. Prospective planned data collection holds the best opportunity for achieving high quality data collection. Criteria or triggers should be identified for establishing priorities for data collection. Prospective pilot studies should be used to refine systems and practices.

16. In addition to improving existing systems consideration should be given to establishing new arrangements such as schemes to collect and collate suspected chemical adverse events similar to those existing for pharmaceutical adverse events. Ways to encourage access to data from public and private sources needs to be identified.

17. Guidelines should be developed to facilitate common data collection and reporting and use, taking into account existing systems such as the IPCS INTOX Data Management System. For risk assessment purposes priority should be given to the improvement of exposure-related information.

18. Mechanisms and networks for data collection and reporting need to be further developed and extended. Opportunities for in establishing special expertise in centres, or specialized networks exist as well as networks built on national, regional and global levels. The potential of INTOX-General, IPCS ChemiNet and other examples such as the model used for adverse drug reaction reporting should be examined further. Specialized networks might allow sentinel reporting and advice for particular chemicals/ groups of chemicals or situations of concern.

19. There are a number of barriers that need to be overcome in order to ensure good progress. These include ethical, legal and financial considerations. The ethical considerations particularly in emergency situations need identifying e.g. sample collection and analysis and follow-up. It is recommended that WHO/IPCS examine how to address these considerations further.
20. Data collection, analysis and use require considerable expertise. Arrangements for training and capacity building are needed to address these issues both from the perspectives of data collection and reporting and interpretation and use.

21. The contribution of poison information and treatment centres to improving public health at local, national, regional and global levels needs further recognition and support. Integrated public health data collecting systems should be encouraged.
IPCS WORKSHOP ON THE COLLECTION, REPORTING AND USE OF HUMAN DATA

Adopted Agenda

Held at Churchill’s Hotel, Cardiff, United Kingdom

25 - 27 February 2004
commencing at 09.30 on Wednesday 25 February

1. Welcome and introduction of participants
2. Election of Chair and Rapporteur
3. Objectives of workshop
4. Recent international developments
   - Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety (Forum IV) (Document 4.1)
   - Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM) – Background Information (Document 4.2)
   - Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM) - Health Sector Input (Document 4.3)
   - World Health Assembly Resolutions
     55.16 Global public health response to natural occurrence, accidental release or deliberate use of biological and chemical agents or radionuclear material that affect health
     56.8 Revision of the International Health Regulations
     56.22 Strategic approach to international chemicals management: participation of global health partners
   - Implementation of the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals (GHS) (Document 4.4)
   - Implementation of Stockholm and Rotterdam Conventions (Document 4.5)
5. Review of current IPCS Work
   - Overview of refocused work programme (Document 5.1)
   - Update on Human Data Initiative (Document 5.2)
   - Poisons information, prevention and management (Document 5.3)
   - Chemical incidents and emergencies (Document 5.4)
6. Case study presentations
   - The use of human data in risk assessment – views of ECETOC
   - The WHO Global Alert and Response System in action
   - Learning from chemical incidents – recent Chinese experience
   - Survey of current views and uses of human data by chemicals assessment agencies
   - Multi-hospital research project for collection of human data in Japan
   - EEA Monitoring - current activities and future perspectives
   - The EU activities for a surveillance system on chemical intoxications
   - The vision for the UK Health Protection Agency
   - Recent developments in US chemicals surveillance

7. Introduction of suggested themes for break–out groups
8. Confirmation of charge to break-out groups
9. Break-out group discussion
10. Report back from break-out groups and plenary discussion
11. Workshop recommendations – discussion and confirmation
12. Closure
Annex 2

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