Activities underway include:

- The Network is initially focusing on activities in four thematic areas:
  - Current Activities
  - Mode of Action
  - Risk assessment methodology
  - Uncertainties and variability in hazard assessment

Contributions to the resources needed to support the Network are welcome. These may be in the form of in-kind contributions, such as information and technical expertise, or financial support. Please contact WHO for further information.

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20, av. Appia; CH-1211 Geneva 27
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Department of Public Health and Environment
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Web site: www.who.int/ipcs

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Network Participation
New Participants who have joined the Network since March include:
- Environmental Protection Agency, Ghana
- Institute for Risk Analysis and Risk Communication (IRARC), University of Washington, USA
- Institute of Chemicals Safety, Chinese Academy of Inspection and Quarantine, China
- Institute of Environmental Medicine, Karolinska Institute, Sweden
- Institute of Population Health, University of Ottawa, Canada
- Malaysian Society of Toxicology, Malaysia
- National Institute of Environmental Health Science (NIEHS), USA
- National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (RIVM), Netherlands
- Oak Ridge National Laboratory, US Department of Energy, USA
- Society of Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry (SETAC)
- Swedish Toxicology Sciences Research Center (Swetox), Sweden
- University of A Coruña, Spain
- US Department of Defense, Science and Technology Directorate, USA
- United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), USA
- WHO Collaborating Centre for Occupational Health at the National Institute for Occupational Health (NIOH), South Africa

Introduction

The Chemical Risk Assessment Network Webpage is Live! Please visit for more information on the network: www.who.int/ipcs/network

Network Meeting
A face to face meeting of the Network will take place from 8 to 10 October 2014 at ANSES, in Paris, France. Network Participants will receive details of the arrangement by e-mail.

Collaboration and Networking
One of the goals of the WHO Chemical Risk Assessment Network is to provide a forum in which Network Participants can share expertise, identify knowledge gaps and emerging issues, promote best practices and the harmonization of methodologies. In efforts to accomplish this objective, the WHO Chemical Risk Assessment Network will be launching a new collaborative web site (an EZcollab site) with access restricted to Network Participants. The web site will serve as a communications tool between Network members as a workspace to share information and ideas regarding human health risk assessment of chemicals. It will also serve as a moderated forum in which network participants can share information which is relevant to the Network and request assistance from subject matter experts on aspects of a chemical risk assessment, for example requests to peer review a draft evaluation. Current network participants will receive an invitation to access the web site in the coming weeks. For more information, please contact ipcsmail@who.int.

Training Database
The purpose of the WHO Chemical Risk Assessment Network Training Database is to provide access to information regarding human health chemical risk assessment training courses worldwide. This relational database will allow users to search for in-person and online post- and undergraduate, continuing education, and society-sponsored not-for-profit training courses related to human health chemical risk assessment. The database will include courses on general and advanced risk assessment methodologies, as well as supporting topic areas (e.g., toxicology, exposure science, statistics, etc.). Details will be provided on the course title, location, dates, and cost, plus full contact details and links to the associated organization. It is intended that this database will be populated by various contributors, and Network participants are encouraged to submit courses to the database or contact the database administrator with suggestions for courses that should be included. The database has now been publicly released and participants are encouraged to add additional courses and share this valuable resource with colleagues. To view courses please visit: www.risktraindb.org. The database is a collaborative project of WHO and ILSI/HESI, which is an NGO in Official Relations with WHO and a Network Participant. For more information, contact Michelle Embry (membry@hesiglobal.org).
The US National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences

The National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS) has joined the WHO Chemical Risk Assessment Network, adding to the network's many participating institutions, all working collaboratively to improve chemical risk assessment throughout the world. NIEHS is one of 27 health research institutes that comprise the National Institutes of Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. NIEHS is dedicated to discovering how the environment affects people in order to promote healthier lives.

NIEHS has a long history of partnering on various WHO programs. For more than 30 years, NIEHS and WHO have worked together under the auspices of a cooperative agreement to enhance global environmental health through research, training, capacity-building, and information-sharing activities. The exceptional cooperative activities resulted in increased global attention and innovative research in several emerging topic areas, notably endocrine disrupting chemicals, toxicogenomics and biomarkers, integrated risk assessment methods, and the health of vulnerable populations including children.

Since a Division of Environmental Health Sciences was established by the U.S. Surgeon General in 1966, the NIEHS has evolved to its present status as a world leader in environmental health sciences, with an impressive record of important scientific accomplishments and a proud history of institutional achievements and growth. The NIEHS is also home to the National Toxicology Program (NTP), the premier government program in the United States for the testing and evaluation of agents found in the environment.

The NIEHS NTP Office of Health Assessment and Translation recently developed a 7-step, systematic review framework to collect and synthesize information to answer environmental research questions. This effort lines up nicely with the WHO mission to assess and manage risks associated with exposures to hazardous chemicals.

Although systematic review methodologies are well established in clinical medicine to evaluate data to make health care recommendations, the procedures are primarily for human clinical trials and consider small datasets of similar study design. Questions of environmental health risk require broad evaluation of experimental animal studies, mechanistic studies, and observational human studies. The methods are intended to increase transparency and consistency, and to simplify the process of reaching and communicating hazard identification conclusions.

The guidelines were developed and refined with the help of experts in systematic review and human health assessments, scientific advisory groups, and the public. Moving forward, OHAT will apply this framework in future evaluations. See the recent article in *Environmental Health Perspectives* for detailed information about the 7-step framework.