WHO Chemical Risk Assessment Network Newsletter

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New Network Projects

Network Project: Assessing Immunotoxicity Risk Associated with Exposure to Nanomaterials

Nanoparticles interact with components of the immune system more than any other organ system in the body, and the potential effects of nanomaterials are not often tested for risk assessment purposes within regulatory frameworks. In response to this concern, the WHO Chemical Risk Assessment Network has initiated a project to develop an Environmental Health Criteria document on ‘Principles and methods for assessing the risk of immunotoxicity associated with exposure to nanomaterials’. The publication will present the current state of the science of testing nanomaterials for immune system toxicity and will put forth strategies for assessing the risk for immune mediated health effects. WHO is convening a core group of scientists with expertise in the field to identify issues and scientists who can help address these. Technical leadership for the project is being provided by The WHO Collaborating Centre for Immunotoxicology and Allergic Hypersensitivity at the National Institute of Public Health and the Environment (RIVM), Bilthoven, the Netherlands. The scoping meeting for the project will be held in April 2015.

Network Project: Review of Chemical-Specific Adjustment Factors (CSAF) in Risk Assessment

The WHO Chemical Risk Assessment Network is convening a working group to review the strengths, limitations, and research needs in the application of chemical-specific adjustment factors (CSAF) in quantitative risk assessment. The work will be led by the WHO Collaborating Centre on Water and Indoor Air Quality and Food Safety at NSF International, assisted by a small drafting group. The group will review and summarize the state of the science since the 2005 introduction of the International Programme on Chemical Safety (IPCS) guidance on CSAF and draft a manuscript that addresses the past 10 years of experience. The research phase will involve identifying examples of assessments where data-derived inter- and/or intra-species factors were considered or adopted. In addition to researching the published literature, examples will also be sought through a request to OECD member countries. Network participants will also be given the opportunity to provide examples. Following review by a WHO Expert Panel, participants in the WHO Chemical Risk Assessment Network will also have the opportunity to review and comment before the manuscript is submitted for publication. The manuscript is expected to become available for review during 2016.

New Network Participants

- Ghana Health Service, Ghana
- Research Institute of Human Ecology and Environmental Health, Russian Federation
- ECHA–European Chemicals Agency (Observer)

WHO Chemical Risk Assessment Network Training Database

The new WHO Chemical Risk Assessment Network Training Database is now “live” and open for population with available courses. This database will allow users to search training courses (of a not-for-profit nature) related to human health chemical risk assessment. Courses can be in-person or online, post- or undergraduate and may include continuing education and society-sponsored courses. Included courses will consist of both general and advanced risk assessment methodologies, as well as supporting topic areas and include details on, location, dates, and cost, 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. To input courses and/or view the database, please visit: www.risktraindb.org.

Examples of courses recently featured in the database:
WHO Collaborating Centres

WHO Collaborating Centres (WHO CCs) are institutions such as research institutes or parts of universities or academies which have been formally designated by the Director-General of WHO to carry out activities to support the work of WHO. WHO does not maintain its own research institutions, but instead benefits from the resources of national institutions which in turn strengthens country resources and enhances national participation in WHO’s activities. The work of WHO CCs covers a wide range of activities, including carrying out research, acting as reference laboratories or delivering training. There are also subject area networks for Collaborating Centres, including for Occupational Health and for Food Safety. A Collaborating Centre can be involved in multiple areas of work relevant to different WHO programmes.

WHO currently has over 700 Collaborating Centres in 80 countries, including 8 Chemical Risk Assessment Network participants. All WHO CCs agree a workplan with WHO, and those which are also Network participants agree to include at least one Network-related activity in their workplan with WHO. Some examples of activities delivered by WHO CCs in the area of chemical risk assessment include:

- A report was compiled on the role of the health sector in the safe management of chemicals, as a contribution to the SAICM strategy in the WHO European Region. The report was compiled by a WHO CC in the UK, working in collaboration with the WHO Regional Office for Europe. [www.euro.who.int/__data/assets/pdf_file/0020/242660/Health-Chemical-Web_Final.pdf]
- An electronic distance learning tool on risk assessment and risk management of chemicals (the “eDLT”) was developed to support capacity building efforts in developing countries. The tool was developed by a WHO CC in Thailand working in collaboration with WHO HQ, the WHO Regional Office for South-East Asia and international partners. [www.chemdlt.com]

Further information about WHO Collaborating Centres can be seen at: www.who.int/collaboratingcentres/en/.