

Advisory Committee on Dangerous Pathogens (ACDP) Summary of the 80th Meeting

The ACDP held its 80th meeting on 10 May 2005. The main agenda items discussed were:

- “Managing the Risks” guidance

Publication of this guidance was delayed due to the General Election. The guidance has now been published at:
<http://www.hse.gov.uk/biosafety/biologagents.pdf>

- Protection against blood borne viruses in the workplace – HIV and Hepatitis

The continued need for this guidance is to be reviewed by the Health and Safety Laboratory in Buxton, and a report on the results of this review will be presented at the next meeting of the ACDP in September 2005.

- Review of Schedule 5 of the Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Act 2001

Members were concerned about the possible impact of the proposed list on laboratory work if it was too prescriptive. Restrictions on holding listed organisms beyond the diagnostic period could inhibit research. One member suggested that there has been a reduction in the number of people training to be laboratory technicians in the US due to a decline in research with the organisms listed in similar US legislation.

It was agreed that the Chairman of the ACDP should write to the Home Office on behalf of the Committee highlighting the potential negative effect of the list on the provision of diagnostic facilities and the ability to undertake future research.

- West Nile Virus Strategy desktop exercise

A report was made of a recent exercise to develop a multi-agency response to a West Nile Virus (WNV) outbreak. The exercise focused on communication and the clarification and definition of the various partner agencies' roles and responsibilities in such an event. Feedback from the exercise was positive and the various issues highlighted by the exercise are to be addressed and considered at the next meeting of the UK Zoonoses Group in November 2005.

The Committee was informed that mosquito surveillance in 2004/5 had found no evidence of WNV, despite testing of 300+ pools of mosquitoes. It was also announced that the Department of Health was funding a three-year study of encephalitis by the Health Protection Agency, beginning later in 2005. It

would consider the aetiology of encephalitis patients from ten neurology centres and complete a virological investigation to refine a diagnostic algorithm for WNV. These study results would be presented to the ACDP for consideration at a later date.

- Study of bats for European Bat Lyssavirus (EBLV)

A summary was provided of the interim results of a three-year longitudinal study on the prevalence of EBLV in Great Britain. Although none of the samples showed any evidence of the virus, these results had to be treated with caution as scientific knowledge on how bats can become infected was still rudimentary. Testing for 2004 was not yet completed.

- TSE Working Group

The 4th meeting of the TSE Working Group was held on the 9th February 2005. Members were informed that Annex F of the TSE Guidance was currently being reviewed, in particular with reference to the guidelines concerning the quarantine of endoscopes used for certain procedures on individuals identified as 'at risk' of vCJD.

- Containment Level 4 (CL4) Working Group

The CL4 Working Group had made good progress in revising the CL4 Guidance, with the final sections of the guidance due to be discussed at the next WG meeting in June 2005. The WG expected to be able to present the complete guidance for approval to the ACDP in September.

- Update on the activities of the Scientific Advisory Committee on Genetic Modifications (SACGM)

A presentation was given on the above subject. The Group had been established in 2004, its role was:

- To advise on the technical issues on activities notified under the Genetically Modified Organisms (Contained Use) Regulations 2000;
- To provide advice on risk assessments for contained use activities involving GMOs; and
- To develop and update guidance on all aspects of contained use of GMOs (e.g. Compendium of Guidance).

Further information on SACGM is available on their website at www.hse.gov.uk/aboutus/meetings/sacgmcu

- Containment and control for work with influenza viruses

The Committee was reminded of the recent incident when a testing kit containing influenza A H2N2 virus was discovered in a Canadian laboratory, resulting in the World Health Organisation (WHO) asking for the destruction of all such kits. Following WHO recommendations, Secretariat presented a review of the classification and containment conditions required when working with different types of influenza virus to the Committee. Members were invited to comment on the conclusions, and in particular on the appropriate classification for the swine virus group. In discussion the following points were raised:

- The guidance needed to clearly state when a virus is HG2 and when it is HG3;
- Swine viruses should be considered HG2 unless a novel serotype was being used when it should be classified as HG3;
- When a pandemic 'flu virus is being worked with in the UK but where the pandemic has not yet reached this country it should be handled at CL3. Once the pandemic has reached the UK, the virus is freely circulating in the human population, and a vaccine is readily available it could be worked with at CL2. It was felt that classification could be revisited by ACDP once a pandemic strain had been thoroughly characterised.

The guidance on containment for work with various influenza viruses will be issued on HSE's website in due course.

- ACDP Annual Report 2004

A draft version of this was presented by the Secretariat to the Committee for approval to publish. Members agreed the content, and Secretariat noted that the final version would be posted on the ACDP website in due course. Members were asked to inform the Secretariat of any key organisations or individuals that they thought should be kept alerted to the publication of the report.

- Any Other Business

No other items were raised.