

Advisory Committee on Dangerous Pathogens (ACDP) – Summary of the 78th meeting

The ACDP held its 78th meeting on 14th September 2004. The main agenda items discussed were:

➤ **Introduction of the new ACDP Chair**

Members were introduced to Professor George Griffin who had recently been appointed the new Chair of ACDP following the resignation of Professor Roger Whittenbury. The ACDP thanked Professor Whittenbury for his work and also Professor Roger Freeman, who was acting Chair in the interim.

➤ **Matters arising**

Members were told that the Containment Level 4 (CL4) Working Group was being reconstituted, following an HSE-organised workshop on working at CL4 held in June 2004. The first meeting of the reconstituted working group would be held in December 2004 under the chairmanship of Professor Griffin.

➤ **Reports from ACDP Working Groups**

○ **TSE WG**

The second meeting of the Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathy Working Group (TSE WG) was held on 12th May. Members discussed Annex A.2 (Distribution of infectivity in animal tissue and body fluids), Annex G (Specialised equipment), and protocols for decontaminating and cleaning gastroscopes and fibroscopes.

○ **BSE Occupational Guidance Drafting Group**

The Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) Occupational Guidance Drafting Group met on 1st July to continue their revision of the guidance *BSE (Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy): Background and general occupational guidance*.

➤ **Reports from other Advisory Committees and Groups**

○ **SEAC**

Members saw the agenda and summary of the meeting of the Spongiform Encephalopathy Advisory Committee (SEAC) held on 29th April.

○ **EAGA**

Members saw the minutes of the meeting of the Expert Advisory Group on AIDS (EAGA) held on 8th March, along with the agenda for the meeting held on the 2nd July.

➤ **TSE guidance review – consideration of Annexes A.2 and F (ACDP/78/P5)**

The ACDP was asked to approve a new annex (A.2) for the guidance *Transmissible spongiform encephalopathy agents: Safe working and the prevention of infection* and to agree to the revision of an existing annex (F).

○ **Annex A.2 (Distribution of infectivity in animal tissue and body fluids)**

Annex A.2 is intended to aid laboratory staff and veterinary surgeons when producing risk assessments for their work with (potentially) infected animal tissues and body fluids. The annex shows the infectivity status and relative risk categories for tissues from cattle, sheep and goats, and is largely based on the tables of infectivity produced by the World Health Organisation (WHO). Members agreed that the new annex could be published (subject to Ministerial approval) alongside the rest of the TSE guidance on the DH website (http://www.dh.gov.uk/PolicyAndGuidance/HealthAndSocialCareTopics/CJD/CJDGeneralInformation/CJDGeneralArticle/fs/en?CONTENT_ID=4031067&chk=4gOe2r).

○ **Annex F (Endoscopes)**

Annex F was originally published on the DH website in December 2003; it had been subsequently revised by the TSE WG after the DH announcement of the first suspected case

of vCJD transmission through blood transfusion. The revision took into consideration the use of endoscopes on patients who have previously received a large number of blood and plasma products, eg haemophiliacs, primary immunodeficiency (PID) patients. Members were asked to quickly approve publication of the revised annex to coincide with the announcement of the risk to haemophiliacs and PID patients from blood and plasma products. Members agreed the changes recommended by the TSE WG, and endorsed publication of the revised annex, subject to Ministerial approval.

➤ **Biological Agents – Managing the risks in the laboratory and healthcare premises (ACDP/78/P6)**

Managing the risks in the laboratory and healthcare premises provides guidance on working with Hazard Group 2 and 3 biological agents. This new ACDP guidance is the last of the tranche of revised/new guidance replacing the 1995 guidance *Categorisation of biological agents according to hazard and categories of containment*. The other pieces of guidance are *Management, design and operation of microbiological containment laboratories* (available as a priced publication from HSE Books), *Infection at work: Controlling the risk* and *The Approved List* (both available on the HSE website at <http://www.hse.gov.uk/biosafety/information.htm>). The ACDP approved the publication of the guidance subject to some minor amendments.

➤ **Infection at work: Controlling the risks from human remains (ACDP/78/P7)**

Members were given the opportunity to comment on this draft HSE guidance. Members were informed that the TSE WG had already seen this guidance; they wanted to ensure undertakers were clear on the low risk posed to them and relatives when handling deceased vCJD patients. The ACDP discussed the types of biological agents that could be present in human remains and confidentiality issues surrounding the cause of death. HSE thanked members for their comments and agreed to consider them for the next draft of the guidance.

➤ **Interim guidance for abattoir workers (ACDP/78/P8)**

Members were advised that the Food Standards Agency (FSA) Board had recommended that the Over Thirty Month (OTM) Rule be relaxed and all cattle born after 1 August 1996 be allowed to enter the food chain. If this change were implemented abattoirs would have to test all cattle for BSE before allowing them to be processed. Due to these changes in abattoir practices, ACDP had been asked to produce guidance for the abattoirs that would process the cattle. The BSE Occupational Guidance Drafting Group produced the guidance for abattoir workers, which was endorsed by the TSE WG. The ACDP also agreed, that subject to a few minor amendments, the guidance was ready to issue to abattoirs when the changes to the OTM Rule were implemented.

➤ **UK Health Departments' Contingency Plan for Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) (ACDP/78/P9)**

Members were asked to consider the latest version of the Contingency Plan for SARS, and give their comments to the Department of Health (DH). ACDP had a few questions for DH on the diagnostic capacity in the UK and the role of Strategic Health Authorities. After a discussion Members were happy to support DH in their publication of the plan.

➤ **Rabies update (ACDP/78/P10)**

Members were updated on the latest arrangements for dealing with rabies and European Bat Lyssavirus (EBLV), including the Health Protection Agency's (HPA's) standard operating procedure (SOP) for management of a suspected human case of rabies, the amended rabies chapter in the Green Book, and the current surveillance strategy for EBLV. ACDP had a few comments on the SOP, but otherwise agreed with the ongoing Government approach to work on rabies.

➤ **ACDP work plan (ACDP/78/P11)**

Members were asked to consider the draft work plan presented to them and to advise the Secretariat of any other work expected to occur in 2005. Members were also asked if they would agree to hold three meetings a year of the main Committee, rather than the previous four, because in each of the last two years one meeting had been cancelled due to lack of business. The ACDP agreed to meet three times a year, but reminded the Secretariat that none of these should be cancelled.

➤ **Any other business**

ACDP were asked for their advice on an application made to the Advisory Committee on Pesticides (ACP) for a pesticide that contained a biological agent. Members decided such an issue was out with their remit because the membership did not have the expertise to advise on the manufacture and use of pesticides. ACDP did have some recommendations for individuals who might have the expertise to help the ACP.

Members then discussed the role of ACDP in the review of Schedule 5 of the Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Act 2001. Secretariat agreed to liaise with the Home Office and the DH's Chief Microbiologist to investigate this matter further.