



ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON DANGEROUS PATHOGENS

Secretariat Report for the 90th meeting of the ACDP, and matters arising from the 89th meeting

1. This paper includes reports on progress made with matters arising from the last meeting, reports from ACDP Working Groups and other relevant advisory committees as well as other items that may be of interest to members.

Matters arising from the 89th meeting

Additional guidance on working with *Neisseria meningitidis*

2. It was agreed at the last meeting of ACDP that re-categorisation to a hazard group 3 was not appropriate for *Neisseria meningitidis* and may result in immense practical difficulties for diagnostic laboratories in hospitals. It was felt that the risk could be adequately controlled by using a MSC for aerosol generating procedures, and it was agreed that additional guidance on these procedures and protocols should be formulated and added to the ACDP containment guidance.
3. It has been agreed that the HSE Secretariat will coordinate the drafting of this additional guidance, and will report back to ACDP at their next meeting in February 2009. A number of experts will be asked to contribute to the guidance or provide comments.

Matters arising from previous meetings

Categorisation of non-circulating strains of influenza virus of known pandemic potential

4. At the 88th meeting of ACDP in February 2008, it was agreed that ACDP would produce additional guidelines for those working with the reconstructed 1918 influenza virus, and that these would take into account the different procedures that could be utilised to work with the virus and the risks involved. It was also agreed that, given the 1918 virus has been reconstructed using genetic modification techniques, the view of the Scientific Advisory Committee on Genetic Modification (SACGM) would also need to be sought in this area.
5. The Secretariat is looking to ACDP members for volunteers to coordinate the drafting of these additional guidelines.

Q fever

6. JCVI are currently considering the situation with regards to vaccination for Q fever, and the following was minuted at their last meeting on 17th June 2008:

“The work on Q fever is also being taken forward. Professor Andrew Hall will be meeting with Professor Barry Marmion to prepare an item for a future JCVI meeting advising the Health and Safety Executive on exposed or potentially exposed workers.”

7. Representatives from JCVI and HSE met Professor Marmion in July to discuss the data on efficacy and safety around the Q fever vaccine used to immunise workers against Q fever in Australia. JCVI will now discuss the issue as an agenda item at the next JCVI meeting on 15th October. It is anticipated that a response from JCVI will be forthcoming thereafter.
8. The British Meat Processors Association, with support from HSE, has published guidance on occupational risks from exposure to Q fever along with other occupational hazards in their sector, which is available for download from the BMPA website: http://www.bmpa.uk.com/Attachments/Resources/971_S4.pdf

Poliovirus audit

9. Representatives from the UK polio containment working group met with a representative from the World Health Organisation global polio eradication programme to discuss progress with the UK polio containment plan. WHO were reassured by the UK approach both in terms of information gathered on sites retaining polio and polio containing materials and also with the inspection programme being undertaken by HSE. The UK was considered to be well advanced in preparation for containment post eradication in comparison to other countries.

West Nile Virus – draft proposal for serology study

10. As has been reported at previous ACDP meetings, a meeting took place on the 1st February 2008 between the relevant parties to discuss West Nile virus (WNV) serology studies, particularly in relation to the farm worker cohort sera. It was agreed that following this meeting HPA would draft a proposal for a serological study on West Nile virus infection and bring it to ACDP in future. HPA will give a verbal update on this at the meeting.

Re-categorisation of *Bacillus anthracis* Pasteur Strain

11. It was agreed at the last meeting that *Bacillus anthracis* Pasteur strain, like the Sterne strain, could be worked with at COSHH Containment Level 2, subject to a risk assessment. However, Defra were, at the time, also considering their SAPO containment requirements for both Sterne and Pasteur strains, and HSE were awaiting this decision.
12. Since the meeting, Defra have considered the matter. The only concern raised related to diagnosis of disease, however, it was agreed that work at lower containment with these strains would not compromise diagnosis of disease in livestock. Defra has therefore endorsed the way forward as agreed by ACDP and HSE, i.e. that both the Sterne and Pasteur strains of *Bacillus anthracis* can be worked at COSHH Containment Level 2, subject to a suitable risk assessment.

Reports from ACDP Working Groups

Containment Working Group

13. The first meeting of the Containment Working Group took place on September 9th and was chaired by Prof. Griffin. Comprising of a range of members from ACDP, SACGM, academia and industry, the group set about exploring the possibility of formulating a common set of containment measures for human and animal pathogens, as requested

by defra and HSE. These measures will be incorporated into a new guidance document intended to support the single regulatory framework for deliberate work with biological agents. Given the fundamental differences in requirements to protect the worker and the environment, this is a challenging task. However, the approach adopted is to be based on the framework used for genetically modified organisms, implementing the principles of a risk assessment based selection of containment measures; and derogation for measures deemed unnecessary to minimise the risks.

14. The working group made significant progress in discussing the commonalities between the current legislative requirements for containment of human, animal and GM pathogens, whilst also taking into account the limitations imposed by the requirements to meet the minimal standards established by European Directives for biological agents (COSHH), genetically modified organisms (GMO(CU)) and foot & mouth disease virus. Agreement was reached that a set of common containment measures (for containment levels 1 to 4) is feasible and could be drafted for discussion at the next working group meeting on the 11th November. It was suggested that outlining the purpose of each containment measures would help the risk assessment process in identifying the most appropriate containment for human or animal pathogens.
15. The working group had more difficulty in identifying a set of common criteria for assigning human and animal pathogens to hazard groups. The intention being that the hazard groups would be used to assign work to the appropriate containment level. One issue related to how to define environmental harm e.g. harm to livestock, economic damage or ability to cause animal disease. The proposed way forward is to develop a number of options to be explored at the next working group meeting including an amalgamated set of criteria for the 4 hazard groups and also a separate set of criteria for human and animal pathogens.
16. The working group has been set a deadline of March 2009 for the completion of the guidance.

TSE Working Group

17. The TSE Working Group has met once since the June ACDP meeting, on the 11th September 2008. Many of the issues discussed at the meeting are ongoing, and thus ACDP members have been updated on these previously.

Annex D – Transport of TSE infected material

18. A draft update of Annex D was presented to the Working Group at their September meeting. Members raised a number of outstanding issues, particularly in relation to transport of infected animals, and agreed to re-draft various sections of the Annex. This will be finalised by mid-October, and the Annex will then be sent to ACDP for approval before being published.

Ophthalmology subgroup

19. The Chairman of the Ophthalmology subgroup attended the Working Group meeting in September to update Members on the outcomes of the subgroup, and the key decisions made. The Ophthalmology subgroup topic group leads have each produced draft guidance on their particular areas of expertise. These are currently with the Chairman and the Secretariat, who are working together to produce a draft final document for discussion at the next Working Group meeting in December.

Infectivity in the anterior segment of the eye in human transmissible spongiform encephalopathies

20. A paper on infectivity in the anterior eye was presented to the Working Group at their September meeting. This issue will be raised again at the December Working Group meeting.

Annex K – Pathology

21. The draft Pathology Annex (K) has been finalised and is currently out for a limited consultation with representatives from the Royal College of Pathologists, the Institute for Biomedical Sciences, the British Neuropathological Society and the Health and Safety Executive. This Annex will go to the December Working Group meeting for final approval, and then to the ACDP meeting in February 2009 for sign-off, before being published.

Annex B – Diagnostic Criteria

22. The National CJD Surveillance Unit has updated the diagnostic criteria for human prion diseases. Annex B of the Working Group guidance has thus been updated in accordance with the new criteria, and has been circulated to the Working Group for comment. This Annex will be circulated to Members for approval in October.

Raising the profile of the ACDP TSE Working Group guidance

23. The Secretariat has been working to raise the profile of the guidance produced by the Working Group. An email update service has been created, so that infection control teams, CCDCs, microbiologists and others working in healthcare settings can be notified of updates to the current guidance, or of new Annexes. So far over 100 individuals have signed up to the update service, from a variety of Trusts all over the UK. The Secretariat prepared a scientific poster outlining the aim and content of the Working Group guidance, and this has been well received at a number of conferences. The Secretariat has also made links with both the Infection Prevention Society and the Hospital Infection Society, to ensure that their members are kept updated about the changes to the Working Group guidance.

Annex C – Decontamination and waste disposal

24. A small subgroup meeting has been arranged for the 7th November to move forward with the proposed update to Annex C of the Working Group guidance. Updating the information in Annex C will also have an impact on other parts of the Working Group guidance, particularly Parts 3 and 4, and these will be updated accordingly.

Revision of the 1996 ACDP guidance on Management & Control of Viral Haemorrhagic Fevers

25. A report on the ongoing work to update the ACDP guidance on Management and Control of Viral Haemorrhagic Fevers will be given under agenda item 9 of this meeting.

Revision of the ACDP guidance on blood-borne viruses

26. The updated ACDP guidance document 'Protection against blood-borne infections in the workplace: HIV and hepatitis' has been made available for public consultation at: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/biosafety/diseases/blood-borne-virus.htm>. A number of relevant committees and professional bodies have been made aware of this consultation and asked for a response. The consultation runs until Monday 17th November. It is anticipated that a final document will be brought to the committee for final approval at the ACDP meeting in January.

Other matters

Membership

27. Dr Mike Painter has decided to step down from ACDP at the end of October, after 6 years of sterling service on the committee. He has been a highly valued member of the committee who has made excellent contributions over the years. In addition to the main committee, he has been an important and effective member of a number of ACDP Working Groups, including the ACDP TSE Working Group, the Key Players meeting for the update of the ACDP guidance on viral haemorrhagic fevers, the VHF Clinical Management subgroup, and the Steering Group for the revision of the ACDP guidance on blood-borne viruses. Although he is stepping down from ACDP, Dr Painter has been invited to continue his term on the ACDP TSE Working Group as an independent member by the Chairman, Professor Don Jeffries, and has accepted.

Appointments and re-appointments

28. Two members of ACDP, Dr Phil Minor and Dr John Keddie, have recently been re-appointed to ACDP for a period of 3 years, until 31st October 2011.
29. There are now six vacancies on ACDP, comprising four expert members and two employee/employer representatives. The areas of expertise to be filled are public health/epidemiology, clinical virology, veterinarian in practice and risk analysis. The Secretariat, Sponsors and Chairman will be conducting an appointments exercise with the Appointments Commission this autumn to fill these six vacancies.

**Secretariat
October 2008**