

Advisory Committee on Dangerous Pathogens (ACDP) – Summary of the 74th meeting

The ACDP held its 74th meeting on 16th September 2003. The main agenda items discussed were:

➤ **Chairman's introduction**

Professor Roger Freeman introduced himself as Acting Chair of ACDP and thanked the outgoing Chair, Professor Roger Whittenbury, for his contributions to the work of the Committee.

➤ **Matters arising**

Members were informed that, following Professor Whittenbury's resignation, Mr John Newbold had taken over as Chair of the Managing the Risks Working Group.

As a result of the Spongiform Encephalopathy Advisory Committee (SEAC) quinquennial review the Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathy Joint Working Group (TSE JWG) would be uncoupled from SEAC. The review had concluded that SEAC should focus on risk assessment, while the TSE JWG primarily concentrated on risk management. The TSE JWG would be reconvened as the TSE Working Group, a working group of ACDP.

➤ **Reports from ACDP Working Groups**

○ **TSE JWG**

The TSE JWG met on the 5th March and 8th July. Members discussed the outcome of the quinquennial review of SEAC, and the proposal to uncouple the WG from the main committee. At the second meeting the JWG considered the revised Part 1, Annex C and Annex F of the TSE Guidance (see below Paper ACDP/74/P8).

○ **TSE JWG Drafting Group**

The Drafting Group met on the 15th May to discuss Part 1, Annex C and Annex F of the TSE Guidance, and recommended them for approval by the TSE JWG.

○ **BSE Occupational Guidance Drafting Group**

A new sub-group of the TSE JWG was set up to review and revise the ACDP guidance *BSE (Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy): Background and general occupational guidance*. The membership of the Drafting Group was drawn from experts on the TSE JWG and interested Government Departments and Agencies. The first meeting of the Drafting Group was on the 5th September, when members discussed their Terms of Reference and the scope of the guidance.

○ **Biological Agents: Managing the Risks Working Group**

The Working Group discussed the final draft of the guidance *Infection at Work: Controlling the Risks*. Members recommended the guidance for ACDP approval.

○ **ACDP Smallpox Working Group**

The Working Group met on 14th July, and discussed ventilation in healthcare, gold standard centres and emergency smallpox centres.

○ **ACDP Containment Level 4 (CL4) and Viral Haemorrhagic Fever (VHF) Working Groups**

The ACDP was informed that HSE was in discussion with the European Commission, HSE solicitors and industry over the use of suited systems when working with Hazard Group 4 biological agents. The CL4 WG planned to meet again in October and the VHF WG hoped to meet shortly after this.

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

○ **SEAC**

SEAC met on the 24th June. All SEAC papers and minutes are available on their website at <http://www.seac.gov.uk/>

○ **Occupational Health Advisory Committee**

At the request of the Health and Safety Commission OHAC had undertaken a horizon scanning exercise. The exercise highlighted the following areas for consideration:

New insights and big issues -

- rehabilitation,
- occupational health support, including empowering employees and employers to own occupational health problems, and
- significance of work-related mental health problems.

Other issues –

- stressors from non-traditional ways of working/technology,
- increasing incidence of TB worldwide,
- genetic screening, and
- the aging workforce.

Themes –

- growth of service industries,
- changes in work organisation, eg globalisation, and
- professional nursing and medical issues, eg competency.

○ **National Expert Panel on New and Emerging Infections (NepNei)**

ACDP was informed that this new group was to be set up as described in the Chief Medical Officer's Infectious Disease Strategy *Getting Ahead of the Curve*.

➤ **Management and control strategy for West Nile Virus (WNV) in the UK (ACDP/74/P5)**

This discussion gave members the opportunity to discuss the Department of Health's (DH's) proposed control and surveillance strategies for WNV.

Surveillance

Mosquitoes were being tested for WNV in three regions of the UK. Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) was also carrying out enhanced surveillance of dead birds. Enhanced surveillance in humans had also started.

Pesticides and repellents

DH and other Government Departments had consulted with the Advisory Committee on Pesticides (ACP) and Committee on Toxicology (COT) over the use of pesticides and repellents that would control vectors of WNV. A range of potential control measures had been identified.

➤ ***Mycobacterium avium* subspecies *paratuberculosis* (MAP) and human health (ACDP/74/P6)**

ACDP had been asked to discuss MAP and the potential link to Crohns' disease on three previous occasions. Each time the Committee had concluded that there was no causal link between this bacterium and the disease, hence no reason for concern over food safety. The issue was brought back to ACDP at this meeting due to the publication of a new study by TJ Bull, J Hermon-Taylor and colleagues in the Journal of Clinical Microbiology. Members were also informed that the Food Standards Agency were keeping a watching brief on MAP, and had convened a workshop to look at the control of MAP in milk. Members concluded that this new research offered no new evidence of a link between MAP and Crohns' disease, but did recommend that Government could be more proactive in investigating the disease and its causes.

➤ **Classification of Mobala virus – an update (ACDP/74/P7)**

At their 72nd meeting ACDP was informed of an inconsistency in the *Approved List* over the classification of Mobala virus, which was currently Hazard Group (HG) 2 even though related viruses were HG3 (eg Mopeia virus). On checking it was discovered that the Committee had originally classified the virus as HG3, so the classification in the current version of the *Approved List* appeared to be a typographical error. Members agreed that this mistake should be corrected in the new edition of the *Approved List*.

➤ **Revision of ACDP/SEAC guidance *Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathy (TSE) agents: Safe working and the prevention of infection, consideration of Part 1, Annex C and Annex F (ACDP/74/P8)***

These new sections of the guidance had been approved by the TSE JWG and were now being presented to ACDP for approval to publish. Members were happy with the content and agreed the sections should now be presented to SEAC for approval.

➤ **Guidance for dealing with cases of smallpox in the event of a bioterrorism emergency (ACDP/74/P9)**

Members were asked to comment on the current version of DH's interim guidelines on responding to a bioterrorism event involving smallpox. Members were reminded that HSE and HPA were working on standard operating procedures (SOPs) for laboratories, and Professor Freeman was producing SOPs for patient support tests. Also an ACDP Working Group had been looking at specific issues, eg care-centres, decontamination, waste disposal. The Committee was given feedback on the vaccination of a cohort of healthcare workers. Members asked about training of healthcare workers and identification of microbiologists with expertise in this field.

➤ **Containment measures for laboratory work with the SARS virus**

ACDP was asked if it should issue advice on the containment measures required when working with the SARS virus. ACDP had already provisionally classified the virus as HG3 at the start of the SARS outbreak. Members recommended setting up a working group to formally classify the virus and discuss control measures in laboratories.

➤ **SARS – Control measures**

Members were asked to provide advice on appropriate protection for healthcare workers looking after patients with SARS. Currently HSE and HPA were advising healthcare workers to use FFP3 respiratory protective equipment, based on the classification of the virus and its mode of transmission. Again members recommended that a SARS Working Group be established to consider this issue.

➤ **Any other business**

Dog and Cat Travel and Risk Information (DACTARI)

Members were given the first six month's results from DACTARI. In summary, thirteen reports of exotic diseases in dogs were made in England and Wales; all had a history of travel or residency abroad. The results would be published on the Defra website.