

Advisory Committee on Dangerous Pathogens

Update on HPA Biosafety training programme

Issue

1. Biosafety training.

Background

2. As members are aware, the issue of training for biological safety was discussed by ACDP in September 2005. The relevant section from the minutes is attached at Annex 1. At the time, members were informed that the HPA was in the process of establishing a core training programme and also provided external training courses.

3. At the meeting to be held on the 21st September, Dr Tim Brooks will give an update on the HPA containment level 3 laboratory training initiative for members' information.

Action

4. The ACDP is asked to note the information, and discuss as appropriate.

**Section from the minutes of the 81st meeting of the ACDP held on
Thursday 1st September 2005**

AGENDA ITEM 8 – Training for Biological Safety

8.1. HSE had prepared a paper for ACDP summarising the regulatory framework in the UK that underlies the requirement to use competent staff in laboratories. Research by HSE discovered that the requirement to provide training is met by a number of means that were explained in the paper. HSE were interested to know if members were aware of any gaps or had any comments on the findings in the paper.

8.2. HPA informed members that HPA was in the process of establishing a core training programme and also provides external training courses. Individuals are required to train and work in Containment Level (CL) 2 facilities for a certain length of time and demonstrate competency, before training at CL3 can begin. Members supported this approach and it was acknowledged that not everyone would be suitable to work at CL3 and certainly not at CL4. The HPA also offers external training courses.

8.3. The number of personnel working in CL4 facilities in the UK is small and therefore the training is usually hands-on and carried out on a one-to-one basis. No visitors are allowed in CL4 facilities. Visitors to CL3 laboratories have to complete basic induction training and are always escorted.

8.4. Members felt that the main area of concern was the level of training given to recent graduates working at CL3, many of whom have a limited understanding of disease risks, laboratory security and the health and safety issues involved. HPA confirmed that they provided external training courses aimed at PhD students but that attendance tended to be low due to the cost involved. It was suggested that this issue could be raised with research funding bodies such as MRC or BBSRC.

8.5. The Committee agreed that proper training was essential but that this should be delivered at a local level. Training courses with a formal qualification in efficiency are not required.

8.6. The subject of the potential misuse of biological agents was raised and members were informed that this issue is currently being discussed at an international level and a report is expected shortly. The current view is that voluntary codes of practice for scientists will be introduced rather than new legislation.

8.7. In conclusion, the Chair suggested that the issue of training should be revisited within the next year, to get feedback from HPA on their new training programme.

ACTION: HPA to provide an update on biosafety training to ACDP next year.