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**HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMISSION
ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON TOXIC SUBSTANCES**

Progress with the Asthma Strategy

A paper by Donald Adey

Cleared by John Thompson

Issue

1. Reducing occupational asthma (OA) by 30% by 2010

Timing

2. Routine

Recommendation

3. To note

Background

4. Following discussions at ACTS in July 2001 (ACTS/18/2001) on the responses to the consultation exercise carried out in winter 2000/01, the HSC (HSC/01/141) agreed to:
 - The establishment of a Project Board to develop the options in the strategy, and new ideas from consultation exercise, into an action Plan;
 - The inclusion of the proposed ACoP text as an annex to the main COSHH 2002 ACoP;
 - The preparation of COSHH Essentials style guidance for the top eight causes of occupational asthma; and
 - A target of 30% for the reduction of occupational asthma by 2010.

A paper 'Tackling Occupational Asthma' (ACTS/05/2003) was presented to the March 2003 ACTS meeting to update members to that point.

At the ACTS open meeting last year OA was one of the exhibition stalls.

This paper is to advise on further activity to meet the Plan of Actions to combat OA.

Plan of Actions - Update

5. The Asthma Project board last met in February '03 and the next meeting is planned for 19th April '04, being held in the TUC's Congress House to highlight the importance of partnership in this strategy. The agenda is at Annex 1.
6. Since the February '03 board meeting members have been updated by bi-monthly 'updates' which commenced in May '03. Acts members have been copied into these and they are attached at Annexes 2 to 6.
7. Two board members have had detailed involvement in the drawing up of a specification for research into the costs of OA to commerce. (This tender is about to be re-issued)
8. These five 'updates' contain most of the information, which ACTS members will need to review progress. This paper is confined to key points.

Communication Plan

9. The profile of the strategy has been significantly lifted by the continued high number of hits on the Web site launched in February last year. Hits on the OA site for January rose to over 9,000, with over 64,000 hits to the site since launch.
10. The Latex specific Web site has had 12,000 hits since its launch in October '03.
11. The main site has now been updated. Rolling amendments are planned.
12. The Abseil from the Tate Modern by three CFPD staff & one Board member on World Asthma Day in May '03 gained local radio & press coverage. Professional Journals also covered the event. Des Brown M.P. Minister for Work is expected to attend a Bakery on a fact finding 'bread baking' visit early on World Asthma Day this year. We will be seeking breakfast TV coverage.
13. The BBC radio 4 programme 'Nice Work' featured OA in November.
14. We are still working to 'place' the soap stories with the media.

Substance specific activity

15. Isocyanates: This will be the main feature of the board meeting next month and builds on a recent visit and presentation to a working group of the Chemical Industries association. Later in April HSL are leading a 24 hour HSE/HSL workshop to establish a 3 year 'achievable' programme under the Plan of Actions.

We will also be looking at the lessons from the Ontario experience with Isocyanates that Dr Gary Liss, will be explaining in several meetings around the date of the project board meeting.

16. Flour & Grain: Covered by a more detailed report in paper ACTS/05/2004
17. Glutaraldehyde: Substitution away from Glut was boosted with the award to Three Rivers Health Trust (Essex based) during Euro week. They replaced Glut with Sterilox, a super oxidised water system. The Project Board will be looking into this area at the next meeting with two presentations on substitution.
18. Latex: The new web site is being revised to make the guidance clearer.

European Week for Safety & Health at Work - 2003

19. Two major events on OA both ran successfully. The first was a conference organised by Professional Organisations in Occupational Safety & Health at which Des Brown M.P. delivered the keynote address. The 2nd was a back-to-back event run the following day by British Occupational Hygiene Society as a series of focused presentations.

Other implications

20. Not relevant

Action

21. To note progress outlined here and covered in the bi-monthly updates (annexes 2 to 6)

Contact

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Asthma Project Board - *Draft*

Monday 19th April 2004

Congress House, Great Russell Street, London, WC1B 3LS

1200hrs – buffet luncheon for - 1245hrs – meeting (*please note amended start time*)

Agenda

1245. Notes of last meeting – already circulated – Jane Willis
Introductory Remarks / Board membership changes. –

Presentations

- 1255 **National Asthma Campaign** – 5 year plan – Donna Covey
(10 min presentation + 5 min questions)
- 1310 **Isocyanates Control in Ontario** – Dr Gary Liss
(30 min present + 20 mins questions/debate)
- 1400 **Isocyanates – IOM study** – results to date
(10 + 10)
- 1420 Tea & Coffee pause (15)
- 1435 **Glutaraldehyde** – presentation by Three Rivers Health Trust
on their award winning substitution. (10 +10)
- 1455 **Alternatives to Glut.** An examination of alternatives. –Ian
Strudley to outline alternatives – a paper. (5mins)
- 1500 Dr John Kerry to present his work on Super Oxidised Water
and other alternatives. (10 + 5)
- 1515 **Plan of Actions** – Progress – Donald Adey
(10 + 5)
- 1530 **Latex** – An update – John Thomson
(10)
- 1540 **Future meetings** – board view – Jane Willis
(10)

Information items (5 mins each)(papers will be available before the meeting
for each item below)(Time allocated for questions given the length of
timesince last board meeting)

- 1550 **BOHRF** – update – Brian Kazer
- 1605 **Flour** – following ACTS meeting – Andrew Maxey
- 1610 **World Asthma Day** – Donald Adey
- 1615 **Close**

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News for Asthma Board Members

A bi-monthly informal update on HSE activity on Occupational Asthma

Issue 1 – May '03

Why this new publication?

John Thompson, Secretary to the Board writes, “One of the welcome suggestions from board members was to increase the flow of information on progress that the secretariat, and HSE, are making with the Plan of Actions. This simple update will I hope fit that bill. Please do feed back views & any item you feel it would be valuable to include.”

Last Board Meeting

The 3rd board meeting on 24th February was attended by 13 members & 8 others. Notes of the meeting issued.

Web Site

The dedicated web site went live on timetable on Friday 28th Feb. In its first two months it received 11,000 visits. Feedback, while positive, has been limited. We are working to keep the pages ‘fresh’. We expect to have the facility to allow the Rose Ct secretariat to update ‘on line’ sometime next year. Further feedback welcome.....

A novel approach to get information across

A presentation by Dutch company, White Queen, on a novel approach to getting risk messages across to industry/workers. A CD rom game style ‘risk messenger’ based on spray painting with Isocyanates. The updated version, still in design, will be sent to all Asthma, & ACTS Board members for views. This is a new concept in attempting to provide information in a way that individuals will find more interesting than traditional paper, or web methods.

Welsh involvement

A visit to Chris Tudor-Smith and two colleagues with the Welsh Assembly took place in late March. Chris and his team were very keen to see Wales become far more involved in the Plan of Actions. A number of suggestions are being explored. John Thompson has been invited to speak to senior local authority officers involved in Environmental Health in mid June.

Royal Congress of Nursing

John Thompson spoke on Occupational Asthma at a HSC/HSE fringe meeting at the RCN Congress on 28th May in Harrogate.

New Asthma Board Member gets stuck in.

Liz Corbett invited Donald Adey to speak to a gathering of EHOs, Health & Safety Staff, & Union representatives in Glasgow during April. Liz is keen to follow on from this in a number of ways:

- by seeing what substances which cause asthma are being used by Glasgow City Council (the largest local authority in Scotland)
- looking to target activity on one substance alone initially
- in time expanding this to the West of Scotland authorities

Isocyanates

A major study by the Institute of Occupational Medicine (IOM) in Edinburgh is set to report on phase 1. The draft report is just being updated to include an executive summary & will be available shortly. It has a mass of information on usage in MVR and other industries.

Tarlo, Liss & Yeung – Ontario study on Isocyanates

The study has been examined and we have written to the Govt of Ontario for more information. We need to understand how they enforce the regulations requiring occupational health surveillance, which seem to have made a difference.

National Respiratory Training Centre (NRTC)

We are looking at a suggestion that we run a programme of training sessions for practice nurses in a few selected Primary Care Trusts to see what impact on the disease this would have.

Scottish Executive

A visit to the Executive in May combined with work on the draft IOM report above resulted in three suggestions to take forward; under a Safe & Healthy Working scheme for SMEs, with the Scotland's Health At Work scheme, and with NHS 24. Also an indication of interest in NRTC suggestion above.

FOD Asthmagens Inspection Pack

The revised pack has now been released for EHOs to use through the LAU web site for local authorities.

Profile raising – fund raising

The World Asthma Day event with 4 HSE staff and Chris Beach, the BOHS member abseiling from the Tate Modern went off very well. Over £2k has been raised. Publicity was achieved on local radio, local papers, & in professional journals. We are watching for further 'mentions' and are pleased & amazed at the generous donations.

Distribution:

- Asthma Board Members
- Advisory Committee for Toxic Substances (ACTS) Board Members
- HSE & HSL Staff directly involved with policy development



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Information

To:	From: Donald Adey
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	 donald.adey@hse.gsi.gov.uk
Date: 31 st July '03	cc: ACTS Members & internal colleagues 'more involved' with OA.

News for Asthma Board Members

A bi-monthly informal update on HSE activity on Occupational Asthma – Issue 2

Research Workshops

The report on the HSL workshop on Research Issues in Manchester on 6/7th Jan is now available. See http://www.hse.gov.uk/research/hsl_pdf/2003/hsl03-05.pdf.

Local Exhaust Ventilation Video

A revamp of this information video has been commissioned – to be available for June 2004. This will feature a case of Occupational Asthma caused by exposure to Isocyanates.

Practice Nurse Training

The National Respiratory Training Centre are finalising a proposal for practice nurse training days on OA. We are seeking four Primary Care Trusts to pilot. Target areas being, Wales, Scotland, West Midlands & London.

Isocyanates legislation in Ontario

Information on their legal approach has been received and needs to be further 'understood' to find the real differences to here. They are updating their figures for more recent years and it would be prudent to await this information to confirm that they have a sustained significant fall in new cases.

Getting OA into a TV Soap

Three story lines have now been worked up and are being ‘offered’ to media contacts. We are hopeful of getting them used on the back of Euro H&S week.

Latex

- Work is progressing rapidly on the production of a natural rubber latex allergy educational toolkit which will be published on the HSE website. The toolkit will be announced by Des Browne, Minister with responsibility for health & safety at work, at the Occupational Asthma Conference on October 14th (see below)
- Local Govt buying consortium to drop powdered gloves. Board member Liz Corbett has found the West of Scotland LAs buying consortium was unaware of the perils, and is now in contact with them.

Prosecution success

Rockwell Solutions Ltd in Dundee fined £10k – exposed workers to Isocyanates – no suitable/sufficient assessment or training. Good case example as no workers actually ‘sensitised’. The Sheriff took the matter very seriously and first imposed a fine double the maximum!

Parliamentary Questions

We handled a PQ from Ashok Kumar, the member for Middlesborough South & East Cleveland, concerning LA run swimming pools. The recent Belgian study, Bernard et al, widely covered by the media sparked this. The DOH Committee on the Medical Effects of Air Pollutants are looking into the findings.

BOHRF Project – OH Guidelines for the Management & Prevention of OA

This BOHRF led project continues to drive forward with meetings hosted and scientific secretary provided by HSE. Last one was in July and two further dates are set – 2nd Sept & 25th Nov.

New Minister to open TWO Conferences

Des Browne M.P. has agreed to open two conferences covering Occupational Health this autumn.

- On 8th October he is launching the start of the European Week for Safety and Health at work. At this event he will also launch phase two of e-COSHH essentials, which will include new control guidance sheets on isocyanates in motor vehicle repair, flour dust in craft bakeries and wood dust in woodworking.
- 14th/15th Oct – Major Conference on OA – Regents College, Regents Park, London. 1st day organised by the Professional Organisations in Occupational Safety & Health (POOSH). This is aimed at small businesses, safety representatives etc and those with a limited knowledge of the subject. The 2nd day is being run by the British Occupational Hygiene Society (BOHS) and is aimed at those with a more in depth knowledge. Hans-Horst Konkolewsky, Director of the European Agency for Safety & Health at Work will be one of the principal speakers.

Want to attend: www.bohs.org/asthmaworkshops

Cellular aspects of occupational asthma

This research report prepared by the National Heart and Lung Institute for HSE is now available. Looking at Immunological studies in isocyanate exposed subjects with the aim to ‘gain a better understanding of the mechanisms of low molecular weight chemical haptens and in particular isocyanates’.

It shows that there is a lack of local IgE and IL-4 production in the lungs following challenge in isocyanate patients, which parallels the lack of detectable specific IgE in the serum of the majority of patients with isocyanate induced asthma. There is evidence of local tissue eosinophilia and IL-5 production. These findings suggest that isocyanate induced asthma in humans is a Th2 type response in which IgE does not have an obligatory role.

ROSPA Conference – NEC, Birmingham

Donald Adey spoke on Occupational Asthma at this exhibition in late May.

Risk Messenger CD

The CD risk messenger in ‘interactive game’ format, mentioned in the last update, has been delayed. It is still planned to ask all Asthma & ACTS Board members to trial this.

Inspection Programme in animal labs

The progress report on the Field Operations Division (FOD) inspections for 2002/03 show that 13 Improvement Notices were issued to eight companies. One was issued with 4 notices, two with 2 notices & five with one each. The programme will continue to concentrate on ‘educational’ establishments in 03/04, before swinging to the ‘commercial’ sector in following years.

Fund Raising / Profile Raising

The final sum raised from the World Asthma Day abseiling was £2,159.38. We are looking at what the National Asthma Campaign are planning for next year and hope to get stuck in again. Thanks again to all involved.

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Information

To:	From: Donald Adey
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Date: 30 th September '03	cc: ACTS Members & internal colleagues 'more involved' with OA.

News for Asthma Board Members

A bi-monthly informal update on HSE activity on Occupational Asthma – Issue 3

Routes of Referral Study results now available

Dr David Fishwick, HSL, led this project to document the routes of referral for cases of OA. It drew its conclusions from retrospective & new cases at 5 hospitals with specialist OA teams and from one general hospital.

Findings from 17 'historic' cases and 97 'new':

- Most individuals were referred by GPs.
- The mean time for referral from start of symptoms was 4.04 years.
- Some patients had symptoms for over 10 years and others remained in exposed jobs for over a year after diagnosis.
- Diagnostic tests performed varied widely between expert centres.

Recommendations:

- The study should be continued & extended.
- “Consistent levels of OH provision are needed to ensure appropriate hazard assessment and health surveillance if required”
- Greater awareness of OA in primary care could lead to improved referral rates and earlier diagnoses.
 - “There is an urgent need to unify national services, so that consistent standards of care are given to workers who have OA as a suspected diagnosis”

Cellular Basis of OA: Immunological Mechanisms – Contract research report now received

The cellular and molecular mechanisms that result in the induction of allergic asthma to low molecular weight chemicals are not fully understood. Project aimed for better understanding of these processes.

On the basis of this research approaches for the hazard identification of respiratory allergens (cytokine fingerprinting) and for the potency assessment (rat IgE test) are suggested.

In HSE's view, it is important that we are able to identify asthmagens by a predictive test, and that therefore the cytokine fingerprinting protocol developed in this project should now undergo a process of validation.

Euro Safety & Health Week – Board members help keep the information rolling!

Asthma Board members have distributed thousands of copies of the Euro week newspaper. Don't worry I am not going to attempt a league table of who handed out the most copies. But I am going to thank you for your efforts. Your respected organisations pushing this information out to members helps to raise the events profile and the seriousness with which we treat the subject matter itself. Thank you.

True Cost of Occupational Asthma

HSE is going out to tender next month for an economist to come up with the 'true costs' of the average case of OA to commerce. This was the top research priority from the January 'research' workshops. Board members Jude Grandison, CBI, and Kim Sunley, GMB, have been assisting in a virtual working group to ensure we ask the correct questions.

Thanks from New Zealand

HSE received warm thanks for a "particularly helpful reply" to a request for information in February to the 'Ministerial Inquiry into the Management of Certain Hazardous substances in Workplaces'

The Inquiry concluded that:

- It was unclear if 'past problems' with the control of Glutaraldehyde in the health sector had been fully addressed
- That two issues in particular impact on managing the OH risks
 - "the latency of the adverse health effects associated with these risks" and
 - "differing individual susceptibility to those risks"

23 recommendations were made & HSE are looking at what more we can distil from these findings.

The full report can be found at: www.hazsubstanceinquiry/osh.govt.nz

Guidance for Bakers

From 8 October, as flagged up in Issue 2, there will also be new COSHH Essentials control guidance sheets on flour dust for craft bakers and smaller flourmills. Please help to promote the COSHH Essentials website at www.coshh-essentials.org. The sheets are free to download and provide simple, practical advice.

Inspection Results

2nd year in four-year programme by Field Operations Division (FOD)

- Inspectors found asthmagens far more often than expected on visits, spending 300% more time on OA than the 'resource allocation'.
- 197 Notices issued. Large percentage on Isocyanates, Solder/colophony, and Wood dust.
- The 3 top asthmagens found were Grain dust (26.8%), Wood dust (14.4%) and Isocyanates (13.4%)
- One successful prosecution in Dundee and another being processed where 5 workers sensitised by prawn proteins. (further information on prosecutions still awaited)

OH in the Annual Report

Two sections in the 02/03 HSC Annual Report feature OA. Giving an overview of the enforcement activity and of the partnership work now running. The BOHRF guidelines project and the LASG work were both highlighted.

Flash Animation project

A new project to produce web-based guidance using 'flash animation' is taking shape. HSE & HSL staff plan at first, to take one agricultural process such as grain milling and produce a web based 'flash animation' interactive 'fact sheet'. This is hoped to be a better way of making the information more easily understood and readily accessed. Full project approval is awaited. (Len Morris in Chemical Risk Assessment Control & Damian Bethea in HSL Human Factors Group are leading with this.)

Health Screening Questionnaire

Flying visit from Texas

Asthma Board member Dr Paul Nicholson has set up a meeting between top HSE staff (Dr's Fishwick & Rawbone) and the representative of a leading US OH company. They will be looking at a new software package involving a 'on line' health-screening questionnaire, to see how it could help with the surveillance of workers at risk from OA.

Where to with Isocyanates

HSE/HSL are planning an internal 24-hour workshop to review the position with Isocyanates. Aimed at bolstering HSE plans to combat OA from the top cause. Final approval for this event, to take place in late January/early February is awaited.

From 8 October there will also be new COSHH Essentials control guidance sheets on isocyanates in motor vehicle repair. Check the website at www.coshh-essentials.org.uk and look under Service industries, motor vehicle maintenance and repair for spraying and other paint jobs.

Research Priorities

The report from the research workshop in January has now been developed into a research plan on occupational asthma. This is attached. If you have any comments on it, please send them to Donald Adey by 31 October. The plan will form the basis of an internal bid for research funds from April 2004.

Chief Medical Advisor's Seminar – Tue 21 Oct

Prof Jouni Jaakkola the new Chair of Occ Health & Director of the Institute of Occ Health at Birmingham Uni will be talking on Occupational Asthma. One of his main interests has been OA, which has a different profile in his native Finland. The contrast will highlight the international dimension alongside HSE's strategy. The seminar starts at 1730hrs in Rose Court with buffet afterwards at 1830. Please contact angeline.estwick@hse.gsi.gov.uk for a place.

- *Know someone who would like included in the distribution list for these 'Updates'?*
- *Got some news on Occupational Asthma to share?*

Email the author – donald.adey@hse.gsi.gov.uk.

Edition 4 will be issued on 28th November '03

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News for Asthma Board Members

A bi-monthly informal update – 'activity' on Occupational Asthma – Issue 4

POOSH & BOHS Workshops – Minister delivers keynote speech

Both the well-attended workshops during Euro week have received wide praise. Des Browne M.P., Minister for Work, clearly engaged with the issues and firmly restated Govt commitment to the targets.

- He stressed HSE's role to protect workers – highlighting recent prosecution success in Dundee.
- Stated Govt determination to get commerce to 'invest to save'.
- Gave stark examples of the human suffering.
- Warmly acknowledged the many organisations involved in this 'partnership' campaign.
- Launched the Latex Web site
- & the new MVR Isocyanates leaflet
- Encouraged 'alternative' methods to get the message across, telling about his own abseiling experience promoting Health issues!

The Minister's speech can be found at: www.bohs.org/gogo/presentations

COSHH Essentials – practical help in controlling chemicals

Des Browne M.P. also launched phase 2 of COSHH Essentials on 8 October, adding 70 control guidance sheets to the system. This phase provides “direct” advice, the system does the risk assessment, the user only has to enter their tasks. The new sheets include control of isocyanates in motor vehicle repair and foundries, wood dust, flour dust in craft bakeries and colophony fume in small workshops. A sheet on health surveillance is automatically provided in all cases involving substances which may cause asthma.

‘True Costs’ of OA – update

Tenders for this research have now been received and the preferred contractor will be selected on 15th December.

British Thoracic Society (BTS) – research proposal agreed

David Fishwick has been raising the profile of OA as a member of the BTS Research Committee. Together with Roger Rawbone a research project into quality/awareness of OH Services with Lung Practitioners – the ‘Quality’ of Diagnosis has been taken to BTS.

The aims are to document:

- The diagnostic approach for those with occupational lung disease in secondary, hospital based, care across the UK
- Diagnostic facilities available for, and numbers of patients seen with suspected occupational lung disease across the UK

Details outputs will be:

- Collate information on the facilities in the 50 UK Hospital trusts.
- Document the diagnostic process in the Hospitals for occupational lung disease.
- Collate information from clinical scenarios given to participating physicians.
- Make recommendations on the provision of expert centres within the UK.

BTS recognise the value of the proposal, partnership activity and the need to fund work of mutual benefit. Some 20% of their total research budget will be committed to this. They are also committed to using their ‘professional clout’ to help deliver the objectives. A steering group with DoH & British Lung Foundation involvement is driving this forward.

New research report

Questionnaire predictors of Asthma & Occupational Asthma – this HSE research provides information towards development of questionnaires to identify work related asthma. Full report at:

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/research/rrhtm/rr164.htm>

Meeting with CIA

Asthma Board member Paul Gannon, together with Michael Topping & Donald Adey saw the Isocyanates Producers Sector Group of the Chemical Industries association on 18th Nov. We plan to build on these contacts and see the British Coatings Federation as a new follow up.

'GP Magazine' – website reviews

Nerys Williams (HSE - EMAS) has got a review of 3 OA web sites, including the HSE one, planned into a future edition of 'GP Magazine'.

Swimming Pools – Asthma Exposure

The Committee on the Medical Effects of Air pollutants has now issues a statement following examination of the Bernard et al paper on schoolchildren in swimming pools. They considered:

- That a more appropriate unit of analysis would have been the number of schools studied as opposed to numbers of children.
- That changes in levels of biochemical markers studied. Surfactant proteins, and the Clara cell markers were less certain indicators of increased epithelial permeability.
- That it was unlikely that the increase in asthma in children was caused by such exposure to chlorine & associated reaction products.
- That further focussed research was advisable

(HSE were drawn into this debate in parliamentary questions)

OA in Crabmeat processors

Mark Piney & Haf Edwards (both HSE) are leading a project looking at both the exposure to OA during the meat blowing operation in crab processing as well as the noise induced hearing loss. The project will see a draft Sector Information Minute (SIM) by February 2004. We are concerned that OA is very under-reported in this industry.

Glasgow leads the way with Latex - authority wide ban on single use natural rubber Latex gloves

Glasgow City council, the largest local authority in Scotland has removed these Latex gloves from all its premises/activities. From workshops, to care homes, canteens, & cleaners. Liz Corbett hopes to share this success throughout the other West of Scotland Councils in the first instance.

Latex web pages

Positive feedback on the site, but some concerns that in places the guidance may appear to weaken HSE's policy – "Single use, disposable natural rubber latex gloves may be used where a risk assessment has identified them as necessary. When they are used they must be low-protein and powder-free." Andrew Curran and David Fishwick from HSL have agreed to review the site and provide a report to the interdepartmental/agency team that developed it. Please send any views on the site to Andrew or David.

ACTS Open Meeting

Asthma Board member Liz Corbett drew applause from the open meeting for her compelling & passionate presentation on OA.

One of the exhibitions mounted featured OA with the trial 'risk messenger' CD rom 'game' drawing much attention. We are still awaiting the updated version.

National Asthma Campaign

- The NAC are about to take 'Asthma at Work' into their new 5-year plan. They are working on some form of 'Employers Asthma Charter' which we will seek Ministerial support for.
- We are awaiting news on how we can support World Asthma Day next year.

Finnish expert talks on Occupational Asthma

Prof Jouni Jaakkola, the new Chair of OH at Birmingham addressed a Chief Medical Adviser's Seminar in Rose Court on 21st October.

He outlined a two and a half year programme from Finland to determine the cause of OA in all cases of adult onset asthma. Interesting finding on the passive smoking issues, but no cases medically determined from that cause as yet.

'Asthma from the housework?'

Recent Spanish research hit Metro and other press. We are not intending any follow up on this community-based study – 'Asthma symptoms in women employed in domestic cleaning'.

In Thorax 2003;58: 950-954

Nurse Training Pilot – update

Andrew Curran, David Fishwick (both HSL) and Monica Fletcher (NRTC) met on 19th November to take this project forward. Planned to have one-day pilot courses running in four areas of the UK next year.

Paint for Profit

New Envirowise free CD Rom – aims to help MVR firms maximise the use of paint and also covers tips for safe handling. Available free from Environment & Energy Helpline: 0800 585794

BBC Radio 4 – 'Nice Work' – Programme

OA took the main slot on the 4th November with Alexs Kiney (Latex allergy support Group), Ronnie Draper, (Bakers Union), & Donald Adey (HSE) speaking live. The RCN and two other sufferers were also on line. A well-balanced programme.

EHO Secondment offer

We plan to adapt the FOD Asthmagens Inspection Pack to produce a specific EHO version. Following the attendance of Donald Adey at a FOD conference for Welsh EHOs we are now seeking an EHO to come on secondment to edit the pack.

Essex HeathCare Trust wins Euro H&S award

Essex has moved from Glut to an oxidised saline solution (Sterilox) to sterilize their endoscopy instruments. The award reflected the careful appraisal which went into their decision to drop this dangerous substance.

John Thompson attended the presentations in Bilbao on 24th Nov:

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/press/2003/e03236.htm>

Glutaraldehyde

We are proposing to publish on the asthma web pages cases studies on alternatives to glutaraldehyde used by health trusts. We will be seeking examples from trusts, which after assessment of the evidence for effectiveness, will be published on the asthma web pages.

Board Moves

- Sandra Caldwell, Chair of the asthma Project board is moving on in HSE – taking up a post as Director of HSE’s Field Operations Directorate.
- Owen Tudor, TUC member has moved to take over the European desk in Congress House.

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News for Asthma Board Members

A bi-monthly informal update – 'activity' on Occupational Asthma – Issue 5

Next Board Meeting

Monday 19th April – The TUC have kindly offered to host this meeting in Congress House, Great Russell St, London WC1B 3LS.
 1200hrs buffet for 1300 meeting. Conclude by 1630.
 Agenda by 22nd March, with major items on both Isocyanates, and Glutaraldehyde.
 Also plans from the National Asthma Campaign.

Top Canadian Doctor to address Asthma Project Board

Dr Gary Liss, who works for the Occupational Health & Safety Branch of the Ontario Ministry of Labour will be speaking to the board on the control of Isocyanates in workplaces.
 Gary has also been invited to speak at the BOHS conference the following day.

Lab animals

Inspection project near end of 2nd year. 60 inspections in total so far. First year concentrated on educational establishments such as universities with 2nd year broadening to include commercial establishments. 16 Improvement Notices have been served on 11 duty holders. No prohibition notices or prosecutions to date. An encouraging upward trend in compliance is being noted.

Progress on Flour Dust

The large cross HSE and Local Authorities project to ‘monitor & evaluate the control of exposure to flour dust, with identification of best practices’ will be reporting outcomes to an internal HSE meeting next Tuesday. (3rd Feb). ACTS will consider proposals for reviewing the flour dust MEL at their March meeting.

On Line Respiratory Questionnaire

Micky Sullivan, the Chief Executive Officer of Occupational marketing Inc, from Texas demonstrated a software system to Roger Rawbone, & Andrew Curran in early December.

The meeting was set up at the suggestion of Paul Nicholson, one of the Asthma Board members.

HSE and HSL are now looking at how this could be adapted for the UK to aid surveillance of workers at risk from OA.

Prof Jaakkola’s Finnish study now published.

Prof Jaakkola talked on his study at the Oct Chief Medical Adviser’s Seminar in Rose Court.

The work is now published in the American Journal of Epidemiology on 15 Nov ’03. The study looked at OA, showing increased risks in both traditional industries and non-industrial jobs such as; waitresses, cleaners and dentists.

OEL Activities on Isocyanates

1. European - Isocyanates have been put on the agenda of SCOEL. This is due to pressure from the AD-Hoc group in Luxembourg being concerned about different OELs for di-isocyanates and monoisocyanates.
2. British – The MEL, unchanged for many years, has been flagged for review, in view of the transition to the WEL system.

Top Level Support

- Minister for Work, Des Browne MP, has signalled his support for World Asthma Day activities in May.
- Newly appointed HSC Commissioner, Liz Snape, also offered to join in the fun.

The European Lung White Book

The European Respiratory Society have published ‘the first comprehensive survey on respiratory health in Europe’. This seems a very worthwhile read with lots of information: http://www.ersnet.org/1/6/1_6.asp

BOHS – London Regional meeting – St Patrick’s Day ‘04

John White of HSL, Ronnie Draper from the Bakers Union (tbc) and Donald Adey, will be speaking at this BOHS meeting which is being given over to Occupational Asthma.

Wed 17th March – 1700 at the Society of Chemical Industries, 14/15 Belgrave Square, London

Control guidance sheets for printers under revision

Ian Hobson from the HSE Manufacturing Sector – Printing Group advises that the COSHH Essentials for Printers guidance sheets are now under revision. A working group with PIAC members will be making the guidance more reflective of dermal risks from chemicals.

New Research – Small Spray Paint Premises

A new research proposal from Mark Piney in HSE Birmingham is under consideration. Project would look to investigate exposure to isocyanates spray in the very small 2/3 persons workshop end of the trade. With a mix of visits to working premises and simulation of the conditions.

Sterilox Technologies Inc

John Thompson and a team from HSE met with Sterilox, at their request, early in the New Year. The US based company President, David Anderson, and his team, talked about their product, which can be used as a substitute for Glut.

Sickness Absence and OA

HSE's Rehabilitation Policy team are developing a sickness absence-monitoring tool for employers. Guidance pages on Occupational Asthma have been added by the Institute of Occupational Medicine, who are about to pilot the system with a number of companies.

While the system looks to help in a wider way it will also raise the profile of OA and should lead to more accurate reporting and quicker diagnosis.

NAC – 'Employers charter'

The National Asthma Campaign intends to launch their efforts to drive down 'asthma at work' at the Trade Union Congress in September. They are still working up plans to include this cause of asthma in their new 5-year priority targets.

BOHRF launch dates

The Asthma 'guidelines' research by BOHRF is on target and launch dates are set: England & Wales – Tue 14th Sept – Royal college of General Practitioners, Kensington, London.

Scotland – Wed 22nd Sept – Royal College of Physicians Scotland, in Glasgow.

Des Browne M.P. Minister has been invited to give the keynote address in London.

True Costs research – delay

This research is now going back out to re-tender, as the previous bids were assessed as not fully meeting the specification.

Risk Messenger – interactive game

Due in part to lack of funds it is now unlikely that this risk messenger will be further developed in this form. Apologies to all those who recall our offer to share copies with you.

Health Policy Seminar

Rose Court 1730hrs – Thursday 26th February.

Prof Jon Ayres, of Aberdeen University will be speaking on **Environmental Health Effects**, how they can be assessed and managed.

Jon has a background in respiratory diseases, and will use examples of inhaled hazards to explore how the OH community could help manage the health effects of environmental exposures. He also has a strong interest in OA so this will be of interest to Board members.

Please email Angela.Baxter@hse.gsi.gov.uk if you would like to attend.

Tea/Coffee from 1700 and a buffet after the seminar.

Plastic Fume Incident – Barnsley

An HSE investigation last year, following a new employee being admitted to hospital with acute breathing difficulty. His exposure to a cocktail of chemical fume has been reported to the Plastics Processing Health & Safety Liaison Committee (PPHSLC) and some strong pointers being made. The incident was set against a background of other workers having complained over a long period without management paying attention:

- Managers should take symptoms reported seriously – not be dismissive.
- Companies should encourage staff to raise health concerns.
- The absence of a safety data sheet warning of respiratory effects does not rule out that processes may generate intermediary chemicals, which can cause serious respiratory effects.
- People can become sensitised after short exposures.

Isocyanates Think Tank

HSE & HSL staff are running an internal 24hour high level workshop on Isocyanates on 27th/28th April. The aim is to establish a recommended programme of cross sector/organisation work that can be achieved in a reasonable timescale. The views of the Asthma Board on 19th April will help guide the thinking.

Further details from Andrew Curran in HSL

Occupational Asthma Training Day

10th March '04. Hilton Hotel, Sheffield

HSL are mounting a one-day training course aimed at G.P.s, Practice Nurses, and others involved in occupational health. This should count for CPD points.

Cost is £125.

Full details from: training@hsl.gov.uk

Chemical Essentials – One Day Workshops

Practical Advice on Working with Chemicals

Jointly by the Environment Agency, HSE, & Scottish Environment Protection Agency.

Friday 27th February '04, Westminster venue. 1030 – 1500hrs.

No cost and lunch provided.

This is an innovative new approach to helping industry control their chemicals.

Chemical Essentials is a cross Government initiative, practical advice on the health, safety and environmental risks of chemicals that can be tailored to individual needs.

Come and get a 'hands on' demonstration of this developing new on line system.

To register to attend:

On line to: www.glasgows.co.uk/chemical_essentials

or Email: chemical_essentials@glasgows.co.uk

Phone: 01772 767586

Team Changes

Barbara Riley joined the Policy team in Rose Court in January having worked in one of the local offices as a Workplace contact officer. Barbara is initially concentrating on the updating of the Asthma website. Have another look at the web site at the end of February! More updates will follow.

Jane Willis took over in December as the new Co Director of the Health Directorate and is the new Chair for the Project Board.

Next Edition – come on – share that knowledge

Publication date of 31st March, deadline for contributions 26th March.

Send to: donald.adey@hse.gsi.gov.uk