

WHO Chemical Risk Assessment Network Newsletter

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WHO Expert Meeting on Risk Assessment Methodologies

Participants from 17 institutions and 13 countries gathered in Ottawa, Canada (9-11 July, 2018) for a WHO convened 2.5 day expert meeting on “WHO/IPCS Chemical Risk Assessment Methodology Development – Future Directions”. The purpose of the meeting was to review the range of risk assessment methodology guidance and tools currently available from WHO and provide recommendations for activities to update, complement and promote the guidance available in order to maximise uptake in chemical risk assessments globally and encourage best practices. The meeting discussed a draft overview of several key methodology documents (prepared in response to a suggestion from the 2017 Network Meeting held in Parma, Italy) and heard about several ongoing initiatives related to developments in areas of risk assessment methodology and evolutions in information sources. The experiences of several institutions in using WHO methodologies and applying tiered strategies were shared with participants. Using a World Café format, participants engaged in fruitful discussions on a range of topics, including Evolving Methods, Risk Characterization and Uncertainty, Exposure, Epidemiology, Fit-for-Purpose Risk Assessments and the Role of the WHO Network. The WHO Secretariat will follow up on the helpful suggestions from the meeting regarding potential new Network activities and future directions of the WHO and Network Participants in risk assessment methodology development. Organization of this meeting, which exemplifies the value of global collaboration in advancing chemical risk assessment technologies, was assisted by the Existing Substances Risk Assessment Program of Health Canada, a Network Participant.

New Network Participants

- Directorate of Hygiene and Health - Environment, Ministry of Public Health and Hygiene, Côte d'Ivoire
- Biosecurity Science, Food Science and Risk Assessment Directorate, Ministry for Primary Industries, New Zealand



Latest Publications

WHO Fact Sheet on Lead Poisoning

The WHO fact sheet on lead poisoning and health has been updated. Lead is a toxic metal which has caused extensive environmental contamination and health problems through widespread use in many parts of the world. Lead is a cumulative toxicant that affects multiple body systems, and children are particularly vulnerable to the neurotoxic effects of lead, even at relatively low levels of exposure. Lead has been identified by WHO as one of the 10 chemicals of major public health concern (http://www.who.int/ipcs/assessment/public_health/lead/en/). The WHO fact sheet on lead poisoning and health has been revised, including the latest estimates on the burden of disease from lead exposure, which indicate an increase in the number of deaths and years of healthy life lost compared to previous estimates. <http://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/lead-poisoning-and-health>

Reminder – Network Participants are reminded that each year the International Lead Poisoning Prevention Week of Action takes place in the last week of

October (from 21 to 27 October 2018), with a particular focus on eliminating lead paint. Institutions can download campaign materials in six languages and can register any events they are planning via the prevention week web page at http://www.who.int/ipcs/lead_campaign/en/.

Latest IARC Monographs

The IARC Monographs identify environmental factors that can increase the risk of cancer. The Monograph evaluating the carcinogenicity of welding, molybdenum trioxide and indium tin oxide has been published as IARC Monograph Volume 118. Welding fumes and UV radiation from welding were classified as “carcinogenic to humans” (Group 1). Molybdenum trioxide and indium tin oxide were both classified as “possibly carcinogenic to humans” (Group 2B), based on sufficient evidence of carcinogenicity in experimental animals. The summary of the evaluation by the IARC Monograph Programme of the carcinogenicity of isobutyl nitrite, β -picoline and four acrylate chemicals has also been published. Isobutyl nitrite and the four acrylates were classified as “possibly carcinogenic to humans” (Group 2B) based on sufficient evidence of carcinogenicity in experimental animals and no data or inadequate evidence in humans.

β -picoline was evaluated as “not classifiable as to its carcinogenicity in humans” (Group 3). The full monograph will be published later as IARC Monograph Volume 122.

All publications from the IARC Monograph Programme can be accessed at <http://monographs.iarc.fr>.

New Publications on Food Safety

WHO has launched a new series of publications on food safety topics. The aim of these Food Safety Digests is to translate complex technical information from scientific assessments into materials accessible to non-experts in food safety. The first digests published (in 6 languages) provide information on groups of naturally occurring toxins – aflatoxins, fumonisins and their co-exposures (<http://www.who.int/foodsafety/foodsafetydigest/>).

WHO also publishes (jointly with FAO) evaluations of the safety of food additives and flavouring agents, through the meetings of the Joint FAO/WHO Expert Committee on Food Additives (JECFA). The summary of the latest meeting has been published at http://www.who.int/foodsafety/areas_work/chemical-risks/JECFA86-Summary.pdf.

Calls for data for upcoming meetings on chemicals in food (including food additives and food contaminants) can be found at <http://www.who.int/foodsafety/call-data/en/>.

Network Steering Group for Capacity Building Convened

A Steering Group has been convened by WHO to facilitate implementation of the Network Capacity Building Strategic Plan. A group of seven Network Participants who coordinate capacity building activities through their institutions has been identified and has started to meet by teleconference. The Steering Group will provide advice to WHO on the implementation of the Strategic Plan, review progress with capacity building projects and activities, coordinate activities to promote consistency with the Strategic Plan and identify overarching issues and lessons learned. Details of capacity building activities will be shared with Network Participants as they are developed.

http://www.who.int/ipcs/network/Network_Capacity_Building_Strategy.pdf