

THE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG

Biosafety sub-committee of the Safety Health and Environment Committee

The 3rd meeting of the biosafety committee will be held on **Thursday, 20th September, 2007 at 14.30 a.m. in the 3rd Floor Library (Room 3-12a), Safety Office, James Lee Building**

The agenda will be as follows:-

1. Minutes of 2nd Meeting (26th April 2007)

To confirm the minutes of the 2nd meeting which are included as Appendix A.

A previous decision of the committee, made to promote transparency, was to post minutes of the committee meetings on the Web. Would members please review the minutes as they stand here and comment on whether any information needs to be rewritten to preserve confidentiality or for other reasons.

Do we post agenda/ associated documents on the web too?

2. Membership of Biosafety Committee.

Professor Au agreed to work with the committee for a year and see the committee through its formation. Her experience with the human ethics committee and how they have organised themselves has been very helpful. This agenda item is to propose a formal vote of thanks to her for her efforts and solicit suggestions for a replacement independent committee member. At the last but one meeting of the University Safety Health and Environment Committee it was suggested that the committee membership be expanded to include an academic from the department of psychology.

3. Biosafety Policy. (*Initially circulated by E-mail on 03/04/07 and also included in E-mail of 20/04/07 copies posted on <http://www.hku.hk/safety> under what's new*). Following an extended consultation period a series of comments have been made and these are tabulated in Appendix B. The committee's views on the comments are solicited and as this is the main business of the meeting we could discuss the policy section by section if it was felt appropriate. The secretary suggests that if members find the policy acceptable, subject to any changes arising from the discussion on the comments made, it should be sent to SHEC for final approval as soon as possible. This will allow the policy to be tabled in their meeting at the end of October.

4. Health and Safety Information for those working with animals in the University of Hong Kong. (Appendix C). This document was prepared to clarify the university health and safety policy for those that work with animals. It is referred to in the biosafety policy under Section 4.4 as detailing the main risks associated with animal work. It has also been part of the submission made by the LAU for continued accreditation by AAALAC. A number of comments have been made by Dr K.S.Lo and your views are solicited particularly on the paragraphs that have been italicized. The theme running through most of the comments is who is responsible for a particular action and how

compliance will be ensured. Comments would be welcomed from the committee on how detailed a policy document should be in this regard.

5. Policy on the Management of Bites, Scratches, Splashes and Needlestick Injuries - For Approval (Appendix D). A summary sheet has also been included as Appendix D1. The intention is that this single page summary could be used as an aide memoir in the event of an accident. One way of using it, for example, might be to laminate it and display it in appropriate places where the risks of an accident were highest.

6. Code of Practice for the Use Helicobacter pylori in the Laboratory Animal Unit (LAU). Appendix E. For information and comment. This Code of Practice has been produced between the Department of Medicine, the LAU and the Safety Office. It is included in this agenda for information and comment if members wish. Many departments have similar documents that describe the use of their tissue culture/ viral containment rooms. The biological safety officer believes that it would promote safe work in these facilities if all departments produced similar guidance for their culture rooms (cell and bacterial).

7. For information. DNA synthesis and Biosecurity.

As mentioned in a previous meeting biosecurity issues have received a lot of attention recently particularly where highly hazardous agents and materials are concerned. This agenda point is included to illustrate the scope of considerations being taken.

A UK newspaper printed a front page headline about being able to purchase smallpox oligonucleotides from a UK manufacturer. Following the generation of poliovirus from synthesized DNA and recent attempts to generate a mycobacterium from synthesized DNA it is claimed that oligonucleotide synthesis needs to be regulated. One possible scheme for this regulation is reported in Nature Biotechnology in the article included as Appendix F. It is also probably worth pointing out that methods for gene synthesis have improved dramatically and are set to improve further (e.g. see Letters to Nature, Tian *et al*, Accurate multiplex gene synthesis from programmable DNA microchips Nature 432, 1050-1054 and many companies such as blueheron, <http://www.blueheronbio.com/technology/technology.html>).

The NIH/CDC visited the Department of Microbiology at the beginning of June to review both their Biosafety and Biosecurity provision and it was interesting to note that there was a significant emphasis on security aspects. Among the recommendations made were that an independent security review be undertaken and that the University produces thorough and detailed emergency response plans.

8. For Information. EEC Green paper on Bio-preparedness. (Appendix G).

(See http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/com/2007/com2007_0399en01.pdf)

This consultative document is quite wide ranging and contains a number of issues within the framework of Biosecurity and Biosafety (Bio-preparedness has similar connotations to the Bio-risk term used in the next agenda point). Following consultation an EU directive may arise with significant consequences for member states.

9. For Information. The “Biorisk” Management Standard (Appendix H) has been posted on the Internet for public comment. The secretary will report to the Biosafety Committee on progress towards an internationally agreed biorisk management standard. A copy of the current version of the standard (the one now available online for public comment at :-

<http://www.cen.eu/cenorm/businessdomains/technicalcommitteesworkshops/workshops/cwa31laboratorybioriskmanagementpe1.pdf>) will be available at the meeting if anyone should want to look at a hard copy. (Please note that the term “Biorisk” is meant to encompass both biosafety and biosecurity.)

10. For Information. Summary of investigations into the August 2007 laboratory associated outbreak of FMDV in England. (Released Friday 7th September 2007) As I am sure the committee is aware the recent outbreak of FMDV is highly likely to have been the consequence of virus unintentionally released from nearby laboratories. A parallel situation in Hong Kong might be the escape of H5N1 and disease appearing in poultry nearby. Appendix I is a posting that appeared on Promed Mail and gives the web addresses for the various reports commissioned by the UK government to establish the circumstances behind the release and to make recommendations that would prevent any future reoccurrence.

11. Any other business

To consider any other business not otherwise on the agenda.